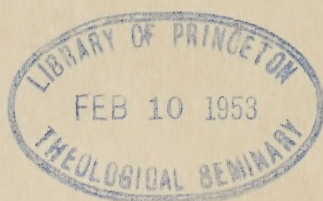


# SERVING RURAL PUERTO RICO

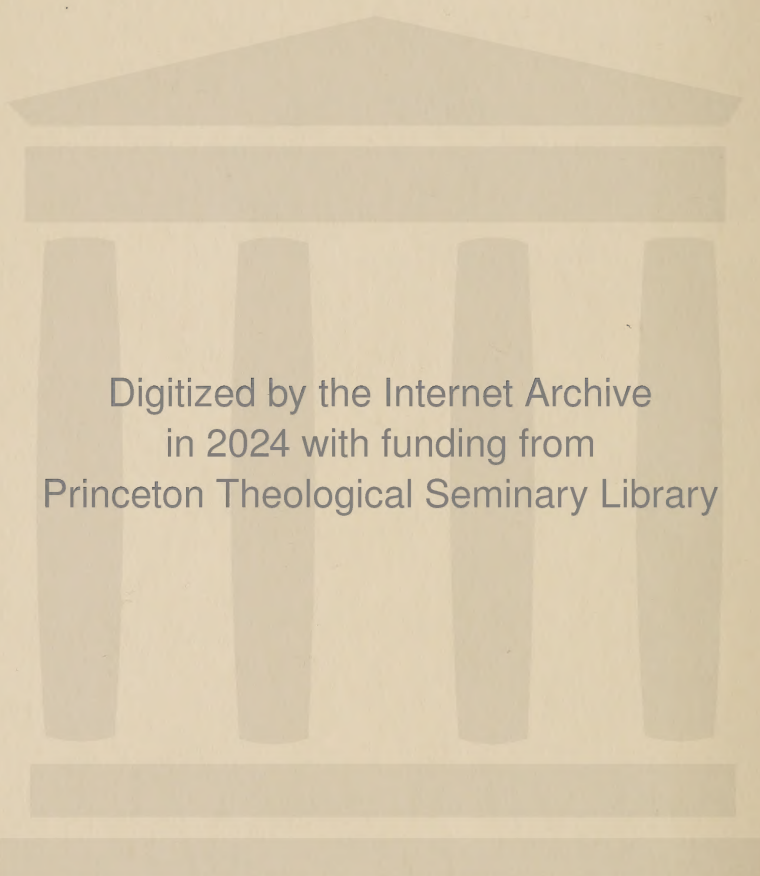
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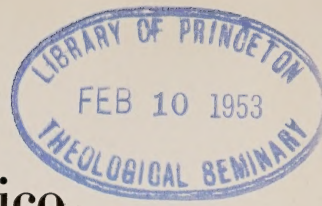


## **Serving Rural Puerto Rico**









# Serving Rural Puerto Rico

*A History of Eight Years of  
Service by the Mennonite Church*

By  
Justus G. Holsinger

MENNONITE PUBLISHING HOUSE  
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1952

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*Frontispiece:* A view of the beautiful La Plata Valley. La Plata Mennonite project buildings can be seen near the center.

Courtesy of Government of Puerto Rico. Photo by Rotkin



## Preface

While writing this manuscript I tried to keep in mind three basic objectives. First, the book should serve as an accurate historical record of the first eight years of Mennonite work in Puerto Rico. Second, it should help to acquaint the constituency of the Mennonite Church with the spiritual, social, medical, economic, and educational service which its agencies, the Mennonite Central Committee, the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, and the Mennonite Relief Committee, have sponsored in Puerto Rico. Third, it should impress upon the minds of the youth of the Mennonite Church the significance of the service rendered "In the Name of Christ" by the one hundred and forty-six young Christian workers of the La Plata Mennonite Project in Puerto Rico, started as an alternative to supporting the military forces of destruction.

The reader will observe that the book is colored with personal sentiments and attitudes of the writer. I have intentionally used the first person in describing some experiences in order to give the story a personal touch. I want to acknowledge and give credit to many workers from whom I have used quotations in order to make the story as realistic as possible. I have spent hours studying the files and reports in order to record the facts with accuracy.

The first manuscript was written in December, 1949, as a history of the Mennonite Central Committee work in Puerto Rico. In August, 1951, it was revised to include also the Mennonite Relief Committee service and the evangelistic program of the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. I want to express appreciation to the following for reading the first manuscript: Orie O. Miller, Guillermo Esteves, Delbert V. Preheim, Wilbur Nachtigall, Ford Berg, Melvin Lauver, and Lydia Esther Santiago. I likewise want to thank Levi C. Hartzler, Orie O. Miller, and Dr. George D. Troyer for reading the revised manuscript. I am grateful to Ruth Nussbaum and Mrs. Wayne Swartzendruber for their assistance in typing and to my wife for her help in proofreading. I wish to acknowledge the courtesy extended me by the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration, the Government of Puerto Rico, and *El Mundo* for permission to use their photographs.

JUSTUS G. HOLSINGER

January 1, 1952





## Introduction

The circumstance, occasion, and manner of Mennonite particular interest in Puerto Rico in 1943 was unusual. The Brethren leader, minister, and political figure, Martin G. Brumbaugh, the founder of the Island's school system, accounted for Brethren Service Committee initial interest. The large majority of Mennonite Central Committee constituents, however, knew little of the Island's location, geography, or problems—social, political, religious, or otherwise. The mass poverty, the maladjusted economy, the problems of accelerated population growth without comparable welfare services or proper industry, migration development, even the relative open door to evangelical Gospel witness: all were outside the horizon of our interests and concerns.

And then, out of the blue, as it were, through the pressing circumstances of CPS and prompted by BSC, we saw the door wide open before us, and the Man beckoning "Come over into Puerto Rico and help us." Our author and friend, and Puerto Rico's friend, was in the first CPS group to the Island in 1943, and continues as leader of the group in the Christian services program from La Plata and from which the resultant evangelical witness has spread. The story is a thrilling and heartening one to all who had any part, or gave or prayed. We are happy that Justus felt led to record it, and for his manner of telling it. It belongs on the bookshelf of all friends of missions, relief and service "In the Name of Christ," and of Puerto Rico.

ORIE O. MILLER

January 1, 1952





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## Historical Background

### HISTORY OF PUERTO RICO

One hundred and fourteen years before the Jamestown settlement in Virginia, and one hundred and twenty-seven years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, Christopher Columbus anchored his ships on the coast of Puerto Rico and took possession of the little island, dedicating it to "Their Catholic Majesty," the king and queen of Spain. He named the island "San Juan Bautista" (St. John the Baptist). It had previously been called "Borinquen" by the peaceful Indians who inhabited it. This island today is commonly known as Puerto Rico, meaning "rich port," and is the only land under the American flag upon which the discoverer of the new world ever set foot.

Traveling with Columbus on his second journey to the new world was a young man named Juan Ponce, a former soldier in the Moor Wars in Granada, and an inhabitant of the ancient kingdom of Leon in Spain. Although he spent fifteen years in the larger island to the west, he was so impressed with Puerto Rico that he secured permission from the governor of Hispaniola (now Santo Domingo) to return to Puerto Rico. He returned to the Island in 1508 and founded Caparra, the first Spanish settlement. Caparra today is a small village located a short distance from the city of San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico.

Ponce left some of his companions in charge of the colony and returned to Hispaniola, taking along some samples of gold. In 1510 he again returned to Puerto Rico and was named its first governor by the king of Spain. He then set out to explore and colonize the island. He was governor for only a short time when his appointment was withdrawn in favor of someone previously appointed by the governor of Hispaniola. Ponce was then authorized to explore new territory. Accordingly, in 1512, he set out to find the legendary miraculous fountain of youth and landed on the coast of Florida. Following his discovery of Florida, he returned to Spain with samples of gold from Puerto Rico and was given a royal welcome by the king. Many honors were bestowed upon him, one of which was the title of "Lifelong Captain of the Regiment of the

Borinquen.” He later returned to Puerto Rico and continued to live there until 1521, when he headed an expedition for Florida. Wounded by fierce Indians, he took refuge in Cuba where he died. His remains were returned to Puerto Rico and interred in the San Juan cathedral.

The Caparra colony founded by Ponce and his settlers suffered from disease, hurricane, and frequent attacks by the French, English, and Dutch. Before the end of the sixteenth century their gold mines had become exhausted and many of their Indian slaves who had been forced to work in the mines died because of the strenuous work. The settlers petitioned the king of Spain for help to defend their colony against foreign invaders. From this petition came the construction of La Fortaleza (1533) and El Morro (1539), both of which are still standing. The former is the governor’s home and the latter fort is equipped with modern military installations. So well fortified was the city of San Juan that it was never completely captured by a foreign force during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Though the island was discovered and explored for its gold, it never proved to be of great economic value to Spain. Its greatest redeeming feature was its strategic position in relationship to Spain and her colonies. Located midway between the two continents of the western hemisphere and closer to Spain than any of her other colonies, the island offered a safe port for the ships laden with gold en route to Spain from the rich Inca and Aztec empires of the new world.

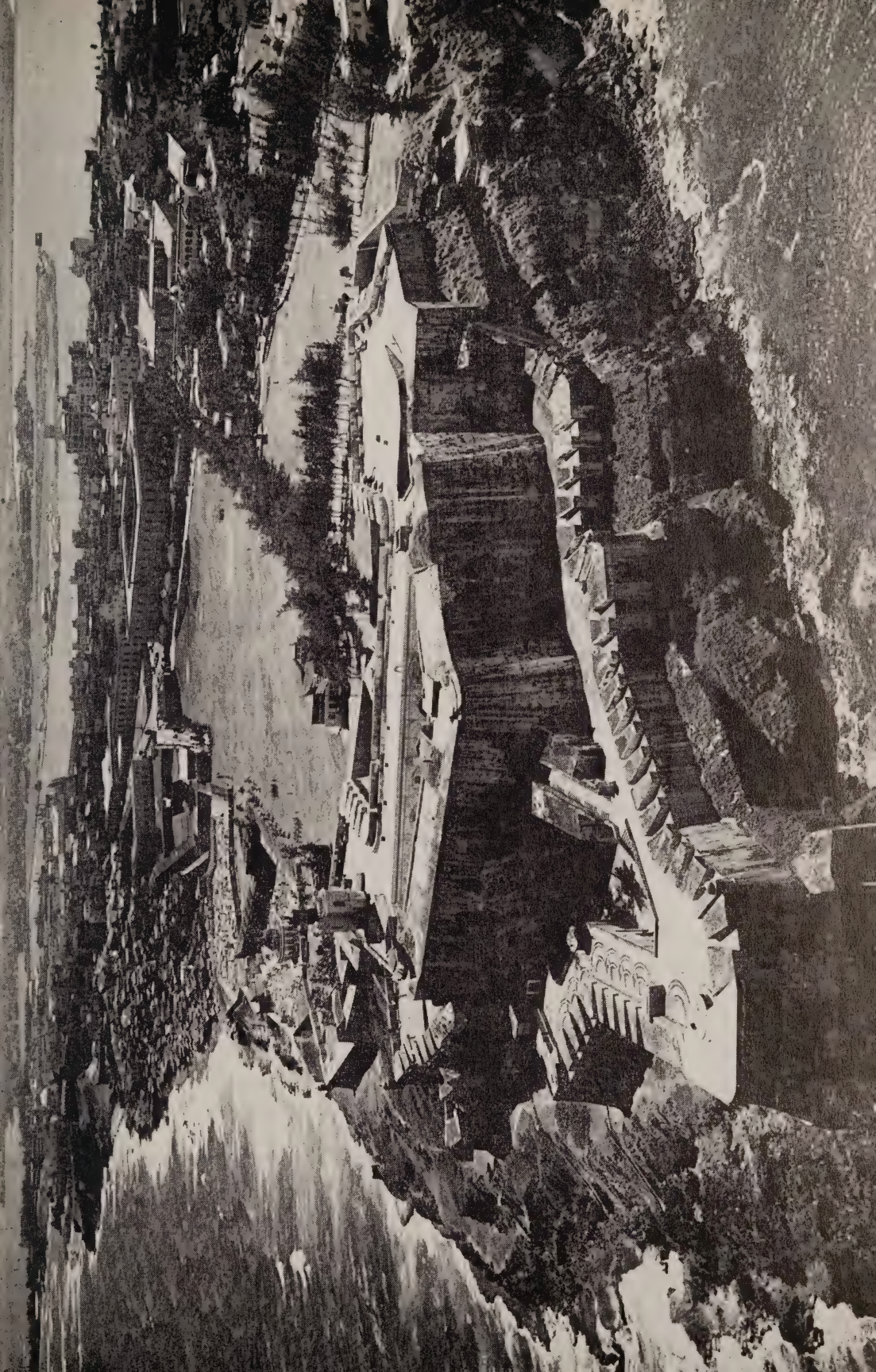
The growing spirit for independence of the English colonies of the new world was also noticeable among the Spanish colonies. After Spain surrendered control of the seas to England, she was no longer able to enforce her strict colonial policies upon her colonies, and in the early part of the nineteenth century all of the Spanish colonies except Cuba and Puerto Rico freed themselves from Spanish control. The revolution of Lares in 1868 was the only incident where Puerto Ricans revolted against Spanish rule, though the feeling of unrest in both Cuba and Puerto Rico was noticeable throughout the nineteenth century.

Cuba revolted against Spanish control in 1895, and with the blowing up of the “Maine” in the Cuban harbor of Havana in 1898, the United States declared war on Spain. The American fleet bombarded San Juan, May 12, 1898, doing slight damage to El Morro, La Fortaleza, and the San Juan cathedral. The unfortified city of Ponce, on the south side of the island, surrendered without a single shot. The United States flag was raised over La Fortaleza, October 18, 1898.

An air view of El Morro Fortress, with the city of San Juan in the background. El Morro was built in the sixteenth century to protect the early settlers from foreign invaders.

Courtesy of Government of Puerto Rico. Photo by Rotkin







The history of Puerto Rico has been one of economic disorder. During the early days of Spanish control, the people of Puerto Rico were hampered by the imposition of unjust colonial restrictions in trade and industry. As early as 1765, the Spanish Crown commissioned Don Alejandro O'Reilly to visit Puerto Rico and report on the economic conditions. O'Reilly proposed the first plan of economic reconstruction for Puerto Rico. He recommended a plan of vocational education for the rural people with emphasis on agriculture. He likewise recommended that the Spanish government purchase a sugar mill to utilize land grants that were not being used for production. Inasmuch as the population was only 44,000 he also recommended that immigration be encouraged. O'Reilly's proposed plan for economic reform was followed by others.

Puerto Rico under United States control has enjoyed marked improvements in highways, schools, and railroads. Though the Island can report more progress than other Caribbean islands during the twentieth century, certainly the half century of American sovereignty did not bring economic prosperity to the Puerto Rican people. The loss of foreign markets for Puerto Rican coffee and the shift to United States currency had effects upon the Puerto Rican economy.

The three serious hurricanes of 1898, 1928, and 1932 left their trails of property destruction and death. The great property losses suffered by many rural people helped to increase the already unequal distribution of resources. Many rich landowners took advantage of these disasters by acquiring cheap land from the small discouraged owners who chose to sell their small holdings rather than to face the struggle of rebuilding them for production.

Collective citizenship was conferred upon the people of Puerto Rico in the Organic Act of 1917. This same act also granted more home rule to the people, permitting them to elect the members of their legislature. Seemingly, little effort was put forth on the part of the Federal government to improve the economic situation of Puerto Rico until fresh courage was brought to the Island when Franklin D. Roosevelt visited it July 8, 1934, shortly after becoming President of the United States. His words to the Puerto Rican people in the midst of a severe depression served to increase their faith in the Federal government.

" . . . And so, my friends, with the help of our government at Washington . . . I wait with anxiety for the solution to these problems of the Island. We cannot do everything in one year. Indeed, this is a work that will take many years. With this in mind, we are agreed in principle on the establishment of a plan for the reconstruction of Puerto Rico. The realization of such a plan will take, of course, many years, but I expect and trust that you will lend your co-operation to make a success of the plan."

## PUERTO RICO RECONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION

The economic, social, and political problems did not come upon the Puerto Rican people suddenly. They arose as an outgrowth of many factors over a period of many years. As the population of the island increased, the tendency was toward greater concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, with the bulk of the population becoming poorer. Don Manuel González, who died in the 1940's, owned 67,000 acres of the best producing land of the island. Whereas he was only one among 2,000,000 of his fellow Puerto Ricans, he owned  $\frac{1}{35}$  of the land of their little island, thirty miles wide and one hundred miles long. While some families of ten and twelve members lived in shacks, others lived in mansions, with elaborate summer homes for each member of the family in inland towns of higher altitude. Many of these elaborate buildings stood idle most of the year, as mere monuments to the feudal land system of Puerto Rico.

There has been a law on the statute books of Puerto Rico since 1900 prohibiting the ownership and control of more than 500 acres of land by a single individual or corporation. In spite of this statutory provision, thousands of the most productive acres of Puerto Rico have been under the control of large sugar corporations. This tendency to concentration of land in the hands of a few lessened the number of small farmers. The system of land ownership appeared to be one of the major economic problems of Puerto Rico in 1935 when the President of the United States set up an agency designated as the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration, commonly referred to as PRRA.

The Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration was established after a careful study was made of the economic situation by the Puerto Rico Policy Commission. The Emergency Relief Appropriation Act was passed in 1935, and in 1936 Congress passed a bill making the monies available to Puerto Rico as a revolving fund, to extend to June 30, 1940.

The PRRA program of rehabilitation and reconstruction was basically economic. The ultimate objective was to check the undesirable socio-economic trend. Thus, PRRA embarked upon a twofold program of rural rehabilitation. First, it acquired lands from large holders and redistributed them in small holdings to former agricultural laborers. Second, it experimented with new crops to supplement the prevailing crops of coffee and tobacco in the mountain regions.

The first step in this direction was the purchase of 4,322 acres of tobacco land by PRRA from the American Suppliers, a big tobacco monopoly operating in the La Plata valley in the vicinity of Cayey, Aibonito, and Comerío municipalities. This land, which had formerly been devoted to the growing of tobacco under absentee ownership, was divided





into 500 small farms, ranging from five to ten acres each. These small farms were leased to the *granjeros* (resettlers) on a contractual basis, in which the *granjero* paid a monthly rent of several dollars, and at the end of a twenty-year period he was to become eligible to receive clear title to the property.

In the municipalities of Lares and Adjuntas, PRRA purchased from private holders two large coffee plantations, consisting of 1,645 acres. The owners of these plantations were families by the names of Castañer and Llinas. The PRRA project took the name of the former and is today known as the Castañer Project. These lands formerly devoted exclusively to coffee production were divided into 200 small farms and diversified crops were encouraged.

At Zaldondo, in the Luquillo municipality, and also at St. Just, farms were also purchased and redistributed among several hundred small farmers at each place. Large farms were also purchased and distributed to resettlers at other points on the Island, including Farm Marini near Mayagüez, a farm on the Island of Viéquez, and Del Río Plantation, an arid land converted into a productive region.

Nearly 5,000 acres under cane cultivation were purchased from absentee owners near Lafayette on the south coast of the island. This land was subdivided into twelve cane co-operatives. Here is located the present Lafayette Sugar Central which is still functioning as a sugar co-operative.

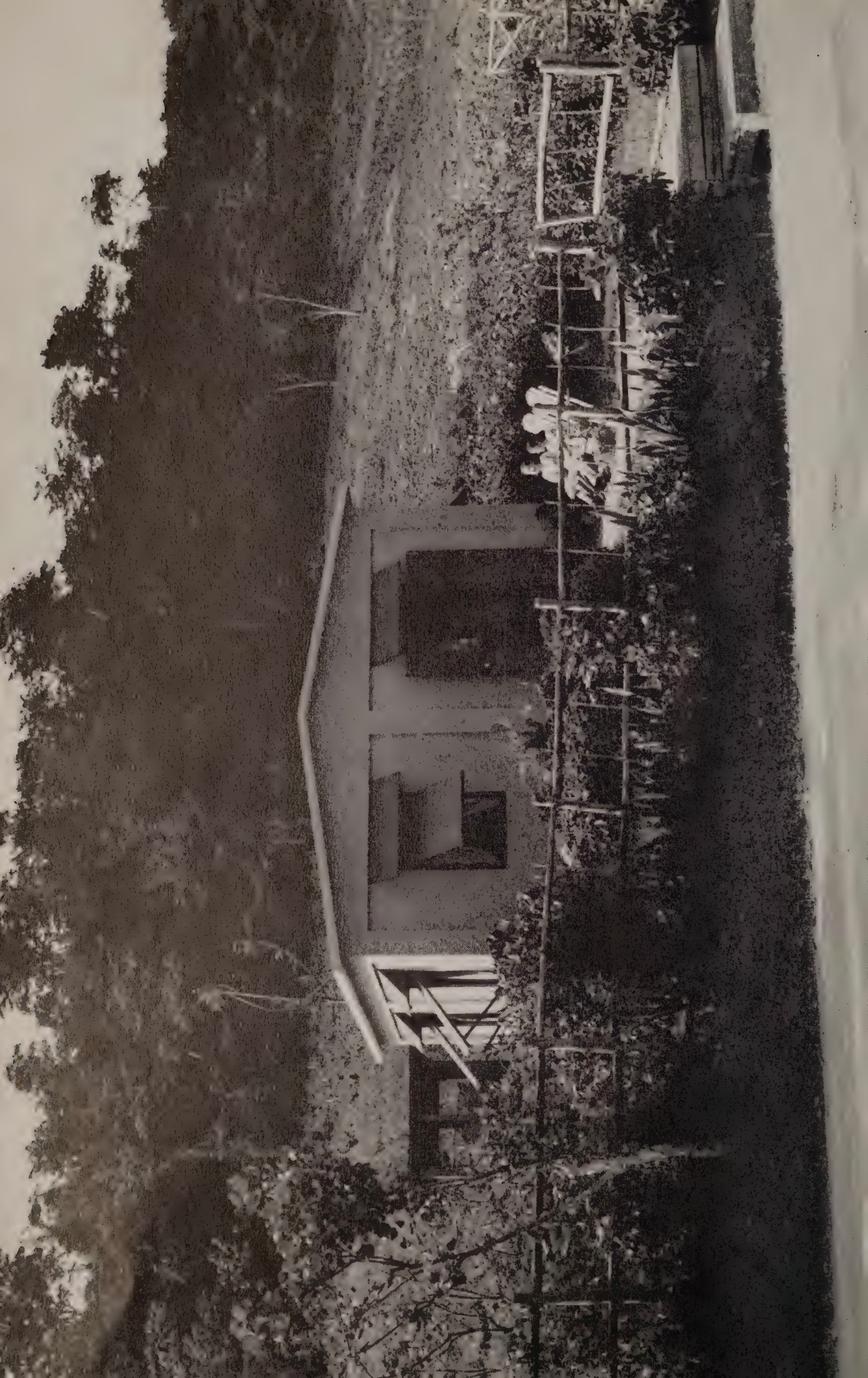
Thus, more than 40,000 acres of land which were once largely in the hands of absentee ownership were purchased by PRRA and redistributed in small holdings to the agricultural laborers who had formerly worked as serfs on the plantations. More than 12,000 new homes were constructed by PRRA to replace the little mountain shacks formerly occupied by the agricultural laborers. These *granjeros* were now on their way toward possessing a small portion of the land of their island which formerly had served to increase the wealth of its absentee owner rather than produce food to feed the mouths of the many malnourished people who inhabited it.

In its program of redistributing the land into small holdings and resettling 12,000 homes PRRA had achieved only one of its two objectives. The second objective of discovering new crops to supplement the prevailing crops was attempted through the establishment of central service farms at La Plata, Castañer, Lafayette, Zaldondo, St. Just, and Viéquez. A trained agronomist was placed in charge of each central service farm to supervise the experimentation program and to co-ordinate

Thatched huts are commonly seen in the coastal and mountain regions of Puerto Rico.

Courtesy of PRRA





its work with the small farms of the resettlers' project. The central service farm was the agriculture center to assist the *granjeros* in better utilizing the agricultural resources of their small farms. To encourage the use of eggs in the Puerto Rican diet, a modern poultry plant was established at La Plata. Purebred New Hampshire Reds were imported and modern incubation and brooding equipment was installed, making it possible to distribute over 300 chicks a week to farmers. Swine projects of purebred Hampshires and Duroc Jerseys were established at La Plata, Castañer, Zalduondo, and Viéquez. Purebred Anglo-Nubian goats were also imported for the purpose of encouraging the Puerto Rican people to produce their family milk supply.

When Puerto Rico became an American colony in 1898 the illiteracy rate was 79.6 per cent. By 1935, it had decreased to 35 per cent as a result of the efficient school system patterned after the systems of the States. Though the illiteracy rate had decreased greatly, there still existed an urgent need for more school facilities, especially in the rural regions. PRRA realized that the success and effectiveness of its rural rehabilitation program would in the end depend upon the local rural people being educated to the point where they could carry responsibility in continuing it. Thus, another phase of PRRA work was to assist in providing more educational facilities for the rural people. Thirty-eight modern concrete second-unit junior high school buildings were constructed in the rural regions and turned over to the Insular Department of Education to administer. The purpose of these schools was "to elevate the standard of living in rural communities, increase the productive capacity of the island, and put into operation a program of social and sanitary betterment, such program to have in mind the most urgent needs of the people of rural districts, and to organize and operate a program of vocational education." In addition to these second-unit schools, PRRA built 178 other rural and urban schools with a total of 331 school-rooms.

The rapid increase in population in Puerto Rico was influential in making the health of the people one of the most serious problems of the island. No people can live happy lives with malnourished, disease-stricken bodies, even though they may be supplied with other essentials of life. The people of Puerto Rico have suffered severely from tuberculosis, intestinal parasites, malaria, and simple infections. When the PRRA program began in 1936, the death rate in Puerto Rico was twice that of the United States, and the highest in the western hemisphere. The death

A PRRA resettler's home. These four-room concrete hurricane-proof houses were a great improvement over the ordinary mountain huts which they replaced.

Courtesy of PRRA







rate from tuberculosis was four and one-half times that of the United States. In rural regions 90 per cent of the people were infected with hookworm.

The Health Division of the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration, in co-operation with the Insular Department of Health and School of Tropical Medicine, established sixty-four rural medical dispensaries throughout the fifty-one municipalities. These dispensaries provided free medical service to the rural communities which otherwise were without medical service. Each dispensary was staffed with a doctor, nurse, social worker, and clerk. These dispensaries were later administered by the Insular Department of Health. In addition to establishing the rural dispensaries PRRA also constructed twenty-four urban dispensaries and assisted in the expansion of the School of Tropical Medicine.

Space will not permit a detailed discussion of all the various phases of the PRRA program during the five-year period from 1935-1940. Programs were organized in the scientific production of sugar, coffee, tobacco, fruit, coconuts, and Sea Island cotton. In all of these programs the economic welfare of the small farmers was of primary concern. Local canning centers were established to take care of surplus foods produced by the *granjeros*. Programs to control diseases among animals through the eradication of ticks were also begun. Soil conservation practices were initiated by PRRA in co-operation with the Soil Conservation Service. Many of the hills that had been badly eroded in tobacco cultivation were put back into production through conservation measures. A program of reforestation was sponsored by PRRA in which recreational areas were developed in the Luquillo Range near San Juan, and in the Toro Negro Range near Ponce. Three hydroelectric plants were constructed by PRRA in an effort to bring electricity to rural regions of Puerto Rico.

A very significant phase of work administered by PRRA was the social service and recreational program of the PRRA rural communities. The basic objective of this program was to help the *granjero* and his family become adapted to their new way of life, brought about by the housing and land distribution programs. An effort was made to create a new attitude toward community life and responsibility and to help establish the feeling of security among the resettlers. In each of the centers, group activities were organized in crafts, arts, dramatics, music, clubs, and ball teams.

Special emphasis was placed on recreational activities in an effort

Interior view of the La Plata community center during the days of PRRA administration. People of the community come to the center to engage in wholesome forms of recreation during their leisure hours.

Courtesy of PRRA

to provide wholesome recreation as an outlet for the proper use of leisure time. Efforts were made to break down the improper and undesirable activities and develop the spiritual life of the citizenry so as to help carry into everyday living ethical standards of conduct and obedience to law. In order to promote interests and skills leading to the proper use of free time, the social service program endeavored to promote sports and teamwork activities appropriate to the aptitudes of the participants. The community center was an attempt to organize personal and community resources with the outlook of wider possibilities of community education concerning healthful family life.

PRRA assisted in the construction of additional buildings for the University of Puerto Rico. The construction program included a modern air-conditioned auditorium with a capacity of 2000 persons, a library building with space for 50,000 volumes, a domestic science and education building, and a biology building. With the addition of these new modern buildings, the University of Puerto Rico claims one of the most beautiful of college campuses. Numerous other Insular and Federal buildings were constructed by PRRA.

One of the greatest contributions to Puerto Rican industry was the construction of a modern cement plant at Nueva Caparra. The cement industry has become an important one in Puerto Rico. It is one of the few industries which utilizes native raw material, labor, and capital, and whose finished product is consumed in Puerto Rico. More small industries of this type will serve to strengthen the Puerto Rican economic structure.

During the five-year period of 1935-1940, with plenty of money available, PRRA was able to operate an extensive program toward the reconstruction of Puerto Rico. During this five-year period PRRA spent approximately \$67,000,000 in the reconstruction of the Island. The Emergency Relief Appropriation Act passed in 1935 expired, however, in 1940. The country facing an approaching war was forced to cut down on the many New Deal expenditures. Thus, the appropriations toward the continuation of the Puerto Rico reconstruction were not forthcoming. The cutting of this stream of Federal monies forced PRRA to discontinue many of its activities. In the process of liquidation many PRRA functions were transferred to insular agencies. No provision, however, was made for the continuation of the social service and recreational programs of the community centers. The complete discontinuation of this phase of the work, along with the acute shortage of medical personnel to staff the rural dispensaries, gave rise to the interest on the part of PRRA in 1942 in having conscientious objectors assigned by Selective Service to Puerto Rico to continue the community health and recreational programs in the rural PRRA areas.

When the Brethren Service Commission consigned CPS (Civilian Public Service) men to Puerto Rico in 1942, they found an open door of service in the rural PRRA community at Castañer. Without the coming of CPS men to Puerto Rico under the administrations of the Brethren Service Commission, Mennonite Central Committee, and Friends Service Committee, in 1942 and 1943, the health and social service programs of the PRRA communities would likely have been discontinued permanently, inasmuch as PRRA was without funds and no insular agency showed interest in taking over the programs. There were hundreds of CPS men in the base camps in the States awaiting an opportunity to demonstrate the sincerity of their stand in favor of a constructive program to promote better human relations rather than participate in the mass murder of their generation. Many well-qualified men with university degrees were assigned to dig ditches, cut trees, dig postholes, with little effort on the part of the Federal government to place them in work equivalent to their training. Thus, the invitation to a significant work in Puerto Rico was a challenge to the many CPS men who were awaiting just such an opportunity to assist in the constructive elevation of human personality rather than in the exploitation of human resources for nationalistic or materialistic gain.

#### **BRETHREN SERVICE COMMISSION AT CASTANER**

That God moved in a mysterious way was as much a fact in the history of the beginning of the CPS program in Puerto Rico as in other great movements of the Christian church. The fact that some doors were closed to CPS service helped to divert the channels of thinking in the direction of Puerto Rico. In looking back over the movements which gave rise to the sending of CPS men to Puerto Rico, one can see the mysterious leading of God. Perhaps many individuals unknowingly played an important role in making it possible for thousands of rural people to receive the services of a group of young men and women who were awaiting the opportunity to give their lives in service to mankind.

Most conscientious objectors were looked upon by their fellow citizens as cowards and evaders—men who had refused to participate in military conflict simply because they were afraid to lose their lives. The service rendered by the Civilian Public Service men and other volunteer workers during and after the War, proved that the majority of conscientious objectors were not afraid to lose their lives in a cause which represented the highest principles of human relations. The service performed in Puerto Rico by those who refused to participate in mass murder has demonstrated that he who dares to lose his life in a cause which seeks to raise the level of human relations, shall likewise find



his life in the hearts of those whom he served. A service which seeks to sow the seeds of love, rather than the seeds of hate, will create a spirit of Christian fellowship, which is the only solution to the age-old problem of human conflicts. The expression, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," is as applicable in the twentieth century as it was in the first century.

The National Service Board for Religious Objectors already in 1941 was contemplating Puerto Rico as a possible field in which conscientious objectors might be used in humanitarian service. Paul Comly French, executive secretary of the board, began a study of the conditions of the Island in hope that Selective Service might approve using CPS men for "work of national importance" in Puerto Rico.

The closing of the doors to use CPS men in relief work in China was an influential factor in concentrating on the opening of work in Puerto Rico by the Brethren Service Commission in August, 1942. The Brethren Service Commission had set up a relief training unit at the Lagro Camp in Indiana for the purpose of preparing men for relief work in China. The training of men was nearing completion and plans were made for consigning a medical group to China when the State Department refused to consent to the using of conscientious objectors on foreign soil. Apparently the State Department did not want the United States government represented in a foreign country by conscientious objectors. Fortunately, the prohibition did not apply to territorial soil and thus the door to Puerto Rico remained open. General Lewis B. Hershey, director of Selective Service, granted permission to the National Service Board in May, 1942, to assign CPS men to "work of national importance" in Puerto Rico.

Leland Brubaker, executive secretary of the Brethren Service Commission and secretary of the Brethren Mission Board, was commissioned to visit Puerto Rico and study the situation. When reservations for plane passage came through, Brubaker was in California. M. R. Zigler, chairman of BSC, assigned Dr. A. W. Cordier, professor of history at North Manchester College, Indiana, to take Brubaker's place. With a half hour's notice Dr. Cordier left North Manchester for Washington, D.C., where he spent five hours in consultation with Washington officials before departing for San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Fortunately, Guy J. Swope was in Puerto Rico at the time of Dr. Cordier's arrival. Swope was the director of all Insular possessions in the Department of Interior and administrator of PRRA. He was quite enthusiastic about BSC beginning a work project in Puerto Rico. He assisted Dr. Cordier in contacting government officials and in making a tour of the PRRA projects escorted by A. M. de Andino, Chief of PRRA Agriculture Liquidation.

Dr. Cordier spent five days in Puerto Rico and made a careful study of the economic and social conditions of the people. The conditions among the rural people were appalling and can best be described in Dr. Cordier's own words:

"To appreciate the need of Puerto Rico and the worth-whileness of the type of project which we have outlined, it is necessary to observe a few of the general conditions of life on the island. Puerto Rico has a land area of 3,500 square miles and a population of nearly 2,000,000. The density of population is over 500 to the square mile, the second most crowded island in the western hemisphere. The Island is quite mountainous and the only redeeming feature with regard to production of food is that tropical conditions make it possible for crops to grow the year around. Poverty is almost indescribable. This poverty has been intensified by the exploitation of American sugar plantation owners. We calculated that in the period since 1914 alone at least \$250,000,000 had been taken out of the island by these American sugar magnates above what might have been regarded as reasonable profit. Ninety to ninety-five per cent of the income of Puerto Rico is spent for food. This is incredibly high. In the U.S. only 32 per cent of our income goes for food. . . .

"Puerto Rico thus is an excellent example of the terrible defects of empire. Living under our own flag since 1900, the Puerto Ricans have been exploited by our business men to an alarming degree. The widespread insecurity, the grass huts, the awful wooden and tin shacks, the prevalence of disease, the low state of literacy, etc., challenged the interest of liberal Americans who felt that such conditions ought not to continue to prevail under the American flag. Hence the development of the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration."

Dr. Cordier found that the income of the average Puerto Rican was less than \$100 a year, and that the cost of living is higher than in the United States. He also noted the extreme shortage of medical personnel on the Island. Among nearly 2,000,000 people there were only 400 doctors, 100 of whom were in the armed service. At the Castañer PRRA project a doctor visited the community twice a week, and in the nearest town of Lares twelve miles away the only doctor was seventy years old. Thirteen miles in the other direction was the town of Adjuntas with a population of 15,000 with no doctor. Thus, within a radius of fifteen miles from the Castañer project lived approximately 50,000 people with the services of an aged doctor. This situation was characteristic of the rural communities of almost any mountain municipality.

Upon his return to the States, Dr. Cordier proposed a five-phase program for the Brethren Service Commission to operate at three points on the Island. He proposed that ambulance and health units consisting

of at least seven persons each, be established at the three leading PRRA rural projects—Castañer, in the west central region; Zaldondo, in the east end of the Island; and La Plata, in the south central region. Each of the units would operate a five-phase program: first, ambulance service in carrying rural patients to district hospitals; second, resident medical service within the Department of Health rural dispensaries; third, health education, including personal and community hygiene, sanitation, child care, etc., which could be done through the use of moving pictures; fourth, community service, to assist the people in preserving their foods; fifth, community recreation work centering around the community centers.

Dr. Cordier's proposed program was endorsed by Guy Swope, PRRA officials, and Health Department representatives. PRRA promised full co-operation in making available housing and office facilities. The Department of Health also expressed its willingness to furnish medicines and films to the extent of their ability.

The problems of feeding a group of workers on a crowded island was also a concern to Dr. Cordier. He found the cost of living in Puerto Rico 170 per cent of that of the United States. Added to this was the scarcity of certain food commodities because of the reduction in shipping from the States caused by the German submarine warfare in the southwest Atlantic. His proposed solution to the food problem was a diet tending to use Puerto Rican products. Those who lived through the trying months of 1942 and 1943 can testify to the fact that the food problem was no small one and that resorting to calabaza and breadfruit was not always satisfactory.

In addition to the aforementioned general recommendations, Dr. Cordier also made a number of specific recommendations after discussing the program with M. R. Zigler. It was recommended that David Blickenstaff direct the unit inasmuch as the work ought to be directed by someone who could speak Spanish. It was further recommended that two units of seven each be sent immediately to Puerto Rico, the one to locate at Castañer and the other at Zaldondo. The Zaldondo unit should have one doctor and the Castañer unit two if possible. A third unit should be sent to La Plata in the near future. The total unit should be named Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit in honor of Martin G. Brumbaugh, the first Commissioner of Education to Puerto Rico. Dr. Brumbaugh was a member of the Church of the Brethren. He later became governor of the state of Pennsylvania. It was only fitting that an organization sponsored by the Church of the Brethren should bear the name of such a distinguished gentleman as Dr. Brumbaugh.

David and Janine Blickenstaff arrived in Puerto Rico, June 16, 1942, to begin plans for opening the Castañer unit. Drs. Daryl Parker and



Carl Coffman with eleven CPS men from the original China unit at Camp Lagro arrived in Puerto Rico the first week of August, 1942, and located at Castaner. Mrs. Martha Parker and two sons joined the unit in October.

The first year at Castañer was not without its growing pains. The first job of the CPS men before setting out to rebuild a community was to remodel a wooden PRRA barracks into a 26-bed hospital. The men crawled under the frame structure on their stomachs with concrete to replace the wooden pillars.

Dr. Parker, a skilled surgeon who had spent seven years in China as a missionary doctor, soon became recognized for his skill in surgery by the medical authorities of the Island, and the Castañer General Hospital had soon established itself as a reputable medical institution.

The idealism and sacrifice of the unit in attempting to aid the underprivileged mountain people struck a chord of sympathy everywhere. The co-operation and response on the part of government agencies and individuals to the program were quite gratifying. The Castañer General Hospital and the community center were meeting such a need in rural Puerto Rico that before long pressure was brought from government officials to establish similar units at other points on the island. CPS men were more than tolerated in Puerto Rico. They were recognized for their contribution to the rural people and welcomed to the island.

The Castañer group suffered many hardships during the first year. Materials for construction were scarce and difficult to secure because of war priorities. The fact that the unit was without a full-time director for seven months handicapped the unity and planning of the program. The shortage of foodstuffs made it difficult to adequately feed a unit of workers and hospital patients. At times no imported food, such as flour or rice, was to be had. In these instances the kitchen was forced to use Puerto Rican foods almost altogether. This, along with inexperienced cooking personnel, sometimes had its effects upon the unit morale.

The first year's hardships were fairly well overcome by August of 1943, and the workers were in a mood to celebrate their first anniversary—perhaps in much the same spirit as our Pilgrim fathers celebrated their first thanksgiving. A great deal of planning and effort were put forth to make the first annual banquet a success. The recreation hall was beautifully decorated and the tables were equipped with candle lighting and flower arrangements. For the first time the members ate home-grown pork, pear and cheese salad, and other delicacies which in the normal course of affairs were almost unheard of.

Some of the remarks made at the banquet were quite significant and will be recorded in the annals of the Brumbaugh history. Dr. Cassel in his discourse said, "The testimony of our lives will be in proportion

to the pureness of our purposes and the highness of our aims." Rufus King stated, "Our past achievements are past, and the future will prove our worth." One of the highlights of the occasion was the "Castañer Prognosis" of the infant Castañer Project, given by Dr. Parker. "The Castañer infant of the Puerto Rico Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit family has proved to be a very unusual child on his first birthday, which we are celebrating tonight, August 7, 1943. It was sired by Selective Service and mothered by the Brethren Service Commission. Its birth and assembly were in Florida in June, 1942. It was brought to Puerto Rico in four parts: David and Janine Blickenstaff arriving to direct the work in June; the first group of four men and Dr. Parker arriving August 2; the other seven men and equipment, August 9; and finally Mrs. Parker and the boys in October.

"The infant has had a very attentive godmother in the person of Mr. Andino of the PRRA. . . . It had a very serious cerebral operation when only two months of age in the loss of its first director, David Blickenstaff. However, it fell back on the old stimulus response mechanism of its distant ancestors and managed to survive until the recent arrival of new 'grey matter,' Rufus King.

"During the winter months it suffered severely from chronic anemia, not to say anything about occasional attacks of the horrid Puerto Rican disease. In fact, some of its red blood corpuscles had to work overtime and carry the load of two or three normal corpuscles.

"Beginning in March, 1943, transfusions of new workers have been given at frequent intervals until at this date, the red corpuscle count has reached almost 80 per cent of normal.

"Therefore in view of all of these facts, and of the future prospects, I think we can give the Castañer infant a rather optimistic prognosis for a healthy and useful existence."

## **ORGANIZATION OF BRUMBAUGH RECONSTRUCTION UNIT**

The Brethren Service Commission gave up the idea of establishing units at all three PRRA projects—La Plata, Castañer, and Zalduondo—in favor of inviting the Mennonites to take the La Plata Project and the Friends the Zalduondo Project. Thus a central organization was established composed of the three subunits at Castañer, La Plata, and Zalduondo. The central organization was named the Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit, and later changed to Brumbaugh Service Unit. The administration of the Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit was assigned to the Brethren Service Commission by the National Service Board for Religious Objectors. Each of the respective church agencies exercised jurisdiction over the financial support of its subunit, confirmation of

the budget, assignment of personnel, and general direction of the program in co-operation with the total Brumbaugh program. Relations with government agencies, such as Department of Interior, Department of Health, PRRA, and Selective Service, were handled by, or in co-operation with, the central office of the director of the Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit.

The three co-operating church agencies were represented in the States by an advisory committee consisting of Paul Furnas, of the AFSC, Orie O. Miller, of the MCC, and M. R. Zigler, of the BSC. The functions of the committee were to determine general policies and to give counsel and advice on any administrative problems which were brought to its attention. Leland Brubaker was appointed to act as executive secretary in the administration of the Brumbaugh unit. The functions of the executive secretary were to clear all matters pertaining to transportation and shipping and all questions relating to Selective Service and NSBRO. He was responsible for the home administration of the total program.

Rufus B. King was selected by the advisory committee to act as Island director of the Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit. His primary functions were to co-ordinate the programs of the respective subunits, conduct relations with PRRA and other government agencies, and to submit a monthly report to the respective sponsoring agencies through the office of the executive secretary.

An Island administrative council was set up, consisting of the directors of the respective units. The council met monthly for the purpose of co-ordinating the total program of Brumbaugh and to provide a united publicity. The council became a valuable agency where common problems of the subunits were discussed and cleared.



# CPS Begins Project

### EARLY EXPERIENCES

The Mennonite Central Committee, in an executive committee meeting held at Winnipeg, Manitoba, April 8, 1943, accepted the invitation of the Brethren Service Commission to support and develop with Mennonite finances and personnel the proposed subunit at La Plata, Puerto Rico. This subunit became one of the three subunits composing the Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit, to work in co-operation with PRRA in sponsoring a program similar to the disbanded PRRA social service program.

Wilbur Nachtigall was selected to assume leadership of the Mennonite subunit which was to consist of the director, a doctor and his wife, and a cook. The fact that the doctor and his wife under appointment were not available necessitated a change in plans. A unit of three CPS men, Wilbur Nachtigall, director, Justus G. Holsinger, community service director, and Erwin Schrag, cook, were assigned as the contingent of workers to begin the Mennonite Central Committee program at La Plata, Puerto Rico.

After several weeks' delay in Miami awaiting plane passage, Wilbur Nachtigall arrived in Puerto Rico, June 24, 1943. Justus G. Holsinger, CPS research assistant to M. C. Lehman in preparation for the relief training school at Goshen College, arrived in Puerto Rico, July 2, to assist Nachtigall in getting a program started at La Plata and in making proper arrangements for a larger unit of workers. Erwin Schrag arrived July 15 to complete the three-man Mennonite unit. Nachtigall and Holsinger went to La Plata, July 19, after orientation in the Castañer kitchen, while Schrag remained at Castañer for about six weeks to become better acquainted with tropical foods.

William Coston, a member of the Castañer unit, had been dispatched to La Plata in May, 1943, to make initial contacts in the community and to begin a program of community-center activities. Coston continued at La Plata until September when he returned to Castañer. He organized recreation clubs, taught an English class, started a program of community

recreation, and began a crafts class in the center. He also revived the community library. This was the first community-center program since the closing of the PRRA recreational work in 1940.

The rugged experiences of the first workers in getting located at La Plata are a part of the historical background of Mennonite work in Puerto Rico. The fact that the world was at war increased tremendously the problems of transportation, the securing of materials, and the making of necessary arrangements for the housing of a unit of fifteen workers—the number of workers expected to come to La Plata within the first year. Strict military regulations took away all of the thrill of travel. Plane windows were shaded for the take-off and the landing, thus prohibiting the passengers from seeing the land which they were leaving or the new land to which they were going. Custom inspection was rigid, permitting no letter to be carried without careful censorship. Each man was carefully examined by FBI officials to ascertain his reason for going to Puerto Rico. Inspectors had to be given assurance that travelers' baggage contained no writing material.

Nachtigall and I first met at Castañer, July 3, 1943, to begin together the work of planning a unit at La Plata. Both of us worked one week in the Castañer kitchen in order to become well acquainted with the Castañer program. Our experiences of cooking for about twenty hard-working unit members and an equal number of hospital patients helped us to see Castañer's problems firsthand. To prepare meals from foods with which one is acquainted is no easy assignment for inexperienced cooks, but to prepare palatable meals from platanos, breadfruit, calabaza, and *berenjena* appeared to be an almost impossible task; and to cook a meal side by side with those with whom one could not converse did not help the situation. Fortunately, nouns could be pointed to, numbers could be represented on the fingers, and verbs could be gesticulated. By using all of these facilities, plus an American cookbook, we prepared the meals without any casualties among the workers.

After our orientation program at Castañer, Nachtigall and I set out for San Juan, the capital city, to purchase the essential supplies for the La Plata unit. Commodities were not to be found in San Juan, even those things essential to living. Our first assignment was to search the city for beds. Beds suitable for our needs and at a reasonable price were almost unobtainable. After hours of untiring searching we located two old frames with fencing wire—selling under the name of cots. The price? Sixteen dollars for the two. One night's sleep revealed that included in the purchase were hordes of what the Puerto Ricans politely call "chinchés," but what to us are plain bedbugs.

Following our first purchasing trip, we returned to Castañer to complete the plans for our final exodus to our new home, La Plata. We

received our immunization shots at Castañer on Saturday afternoon and boarded the *guagua* (large bus) and headed for the city of Ponce, the halfway mark between Castañer and La Plata. After bouncing over the mountain roads and swinging around the mountain curves to the tune of chattering people, squealing pigs, and cackling chickens, we arrived in Ponce about dusk. We were so tired from our ride and sick from our immunizations that we immediately got a room at the Inglaterra and went to bed, without so much as seeing the town.

Sunday morning found us well rested and anxious to find an English church service. After inquiring from a number of people, we located a church which had a class taught in English for the benefit of service men. The class consisted of about six members and was taught by a Puerto Rican business man. Following the class period we talked with the teacher, telling him of our purpose for being in Puerto Rico. After Sunday school we went to the Episcopal Church where the service was held in English. We found the service conducted in a formal manner with hardly more than a dozen attending. We were surprised to find that the acting rector of the service was also the superintendent of St. Luke's Hospital, a man whom we had previously met.

Monday morning came too soon, and at a reasonable hour we began making plans for the remaining part of the trip to La Plata. Not yet familiar with the Puerto Rican system of public transportation, we assumed that public cars would pick us up at the hotel. Nachtigall thought it best to go to the plaza and arrange in person to have a public car call for us at the hotel since we were not too well acquainted with the efficiency of Puerto Rican phone service. Careful arrangements were made with a *guaguita* driver, in Wilbur's Spanish and the driver's English, to pick us up at the hotel around noon. We waited and waited, but no car arrived. Finally, after several hours of waiting, Nachtigall made an investigation of his previous arrangement, only to find that none of the dozen or more public car drivers on the plaza knew a thing about the agreement. The driver had apparently acquired his load with little effort and left. After considerable discussion Nachtigall finally found a chauffeur who expressed a willingness to take us. His car was almost ready to fall apart and he already had seven passengers, but two more passengers with over a hundred pounds of baggage, would just complete his load. The hour of the afternoon reminded us that we dare not pass up the only opportunity of getting to La Plata that day, and so nine full-sized men crowded into an ordinary two-seated touring car. The words of one of the passengers describe the crowded situation.

"On my first trip from Ponce to La Plata by *publico* I was one of the five passengers on the back seat of an ordinary car. I laughed when I actually saw four full-grown men occupy the front seat of that car.



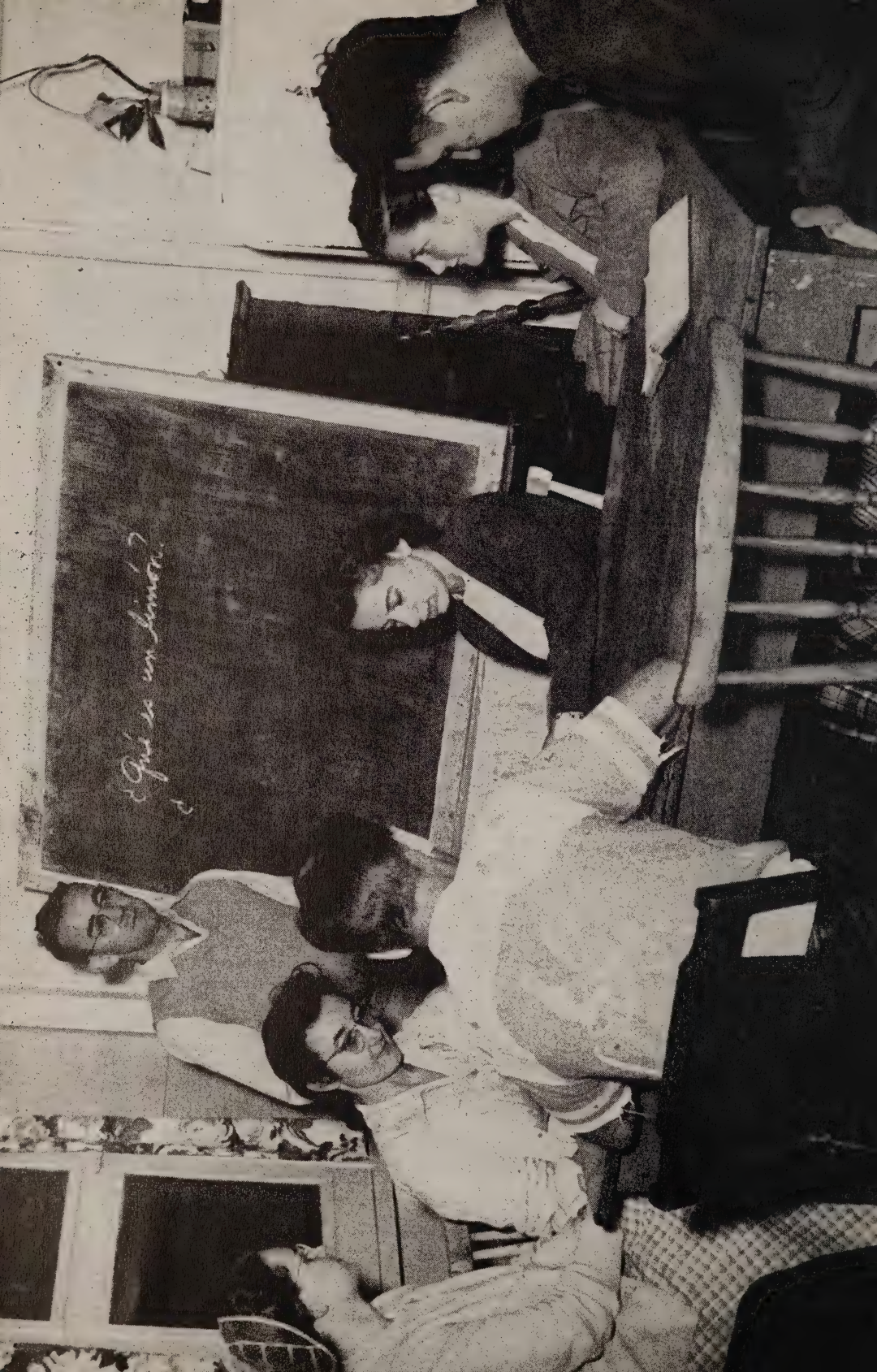
However, on my second trip I didn't laugh; I was one of the four in the front seat. I still can't figure out where the other three men found room to sit."

The front right tire was almost twice its normal size and we expected it to blow out any moment. The car seemed to have no brakes, but somehow the driver was able to make all of the horseshoe curves. Once we stopped at a little restaurant for refreshments, but we could not enjoy the cokes with our eyes constantly on that front tire.

When we got off the car at Empalme, we still were a mile from La Plata. Nachtigall walked in to La Plata to ask if the PRRA pickup could come for our baggage. While I remained to guard the baggage the minutes seemed like hours. The Aibonito-Cayey bus passed and a number of people got off, and headed for La Plata, a fact I later realized. They looked at my baggage and apparently thought that I was going their way. After a number of signs, and Spanish discourses, each seized a piece of baggage, placed it on his head and we were off for the last mile, a whole army of us it seemed. Those who knew a few words of English tried to make me feel welcome, while the others sized me up, probably wondering what it all meant. Halfway to the project we met the PRRA pickup, driven by a middle-aged man in a white shirt, tie, and coat. I guessed this to be the PRRA co-ordinator, though I hardly expected him to be so well dressed. I was indeed surprised when told that this gentleman was only Paco the chauffeur. Not yet realizing the status of a chauffeur in Puerto Rico, I hardly knew how we would find higher government officials dressed—and to think that we had been instructed before leaving that we would hardly need suits in Puerto Rico.

When we arrived at the bunkhouse the strain was too much. With as few words as possible we tied up our mosquito nets and hit the hay—literally, since the mattresses were fabricated from a similar material. As darkness came, our bodies became common pasture for the many bugs that had made the trip from San Juan in the niches of our newly purchased beds. Our first work day at La Plata was spent in "work of national importance." The incidents of the day can best be described by director Nachtigall himself.

"Further investigations revealed evidences of hordes of chinchés, as the Puerto Ricans exclaimed in their vigorous staccato. My experience with bedbugs heretofore has been limited, but now I think I am a veteran! When Coston and I took our beds out of the building, we soon acquired a crowd—something that isn't hard to do here. Everyone was shouting advice to us. I couldn't understand, but the expressions on their faces, the many vigorous motions of their hands and arms, and the staccato flow of Spanish convinced me that things must certainly be





serious. By unanimous vote of all concerned, it was agreed to try 'gas.' ('Gas' is the term applied to kerosene by the Puerto Ricans.) One fellow even suggested soaking the bed in 'gas' every day for a week! Well, we used the 'heat treatment' or something or other, and if the eggs didn't hatch, they never will! We hope our beds will offer us more comfortable sleeping from now on."

We were soon to realize that chinchies were not our only problem. With no screens on our windows and doors, other small animals found it quite convenient to share our sleeping quarters in the night. Again, the quoted description of one who experienced firsthand a few of our first problems will give the reader a vivid picture.

"We also had to set up a campaign against rats. The countryside is literally alive with rats. Puerto Rican families merely take them for granted, for they have lived with rats for years. Well, that idea doesn't meet with the approval of a continental. The first night I lay awake while a nice big rat investigated the contents of my suitcase. I don't mind cockroaches in my coffee, ants in my soup, mosquitoes under my netting, flies in my room, bugs in my rice, but I do not relish sleeping with rats! So we set some traps. Net results thus far? One rat. Justus saw the rat in his room, so we forthwith began arming for combat. In the meantime, our friend obligingly walked into the trap. I am sure we presented quite a picture, armed to the teeth with the only broom on the whole project and a couple of clubs."

Perhaps it would not be fitting nor proper to record all of our varied experiences as we first labored together to get things going. The pleasant experiences by far outnumbered the unpleasant ones. Many sincere and lasting friendships were formed with the Puerto Rican people during those first few months when we had to rely heavily upon them for our very existence. As we worked side by side with the people of the community, we appreciated the many fine qualities which they possessed and felt at times that perhaps we had more to learn from them than they from us.

One of our most serious problems was that of not being able to speak with the people whom we had come to serve. We early realized that we could not go on indefinitely pointing to objects and answering "*sí*" without fully understanding the questions. To help overcome this difficulty we pledged ourselves to Spanish study and asked Coston to be our teacher. The class was indeed informal with our teacher lying stretched out on a cot, scantily clad, with his book in hand as we sweated and labored in the July heat trying to get the proper verb end-

All new workers enroll in a Spanish class designed to help them begin conversing with the people.



ings and repeating the "ll's," "ñ's" and "rr's." After intensive study we managed to make ourselves understood in common expressions by the constant repetition of what sounded to us like Spanish.

All people must eat; therefore one of our first major decisions was to begin a garden. What we knew about tropical gardening was indeed little. With the able advice of the PRRA co-ordinator, a graduate agronomist, we were eating home-grown vegetables in early fall. We soon discovered, however, that tropical gardening was indeed different from gardening in Kansas, Virginia, or California. A small garden plot that could easily be worked in one's off hours in the States, required the full time of one man to see that the small seeds lay still until they had time to germinate. There were always hundreds of little bugs waiting for one to take his siesta so they could raid the garden. We sowed several beds of lettuce before we were informed by the co-ordinator that the small ants were carrying away the seeds before they had time to germinate. What could be done? It was quite simple; just outwit the ants by mixing ground coconut with the seeds and while the ants dragged away the coconut the seeds would quickly shoot forth their little sprouts to get a good foothold in the soil.

Each morning revealed new tactics of the insects. Some of the nice big tomato plants were cut off at the ground and lay wilting in the morning sun. This was done by the infamous mole cricket, one of Puerto Rico's most dreaded insects. What to do? Again it was quite simple. Just encircle the plant with a mixture of Paris green and corn meal. The crickets like the taste of the mixture, and it worked. The tobacco growers had been doing this for years. But who were we?—to be sent where?—to teach whom? We thought we had come to teach the hill folk of Puerto Rico, and we were soon to realize that years of experience had taught them many things which we had yet to learn. In spite of the numerous problems and handicaps in tropical gardening we were able to serve green vegetables to Leland Brubaker, the BSC executive secretary, when he visited La Plata in September, 1943.

The coming of Erwin Schrag to La Plata from Castañer, August 23, 1943, was welcome news to us who were looking forward to the day when we could again enjoy American cooked food. Schrag proved his abilities as a cook at Castañer, and they rather reluctantly released him for La Plata. The presence of a cook, the construction of a little kitchen to the back side of the bunkhouse, and the purchasing of cooking utensils made it possible for our four-man unit to begin its own cooking. For almost two months we had boarded in the home of the co-ordinator. This experience proved valuable in that it helped us become better acquainted with the head PRRA official at La Plata and with Puerto Rican customs. The wife of the co-ordinator was a university graduate

in home economics and was supervisor of the school lunchrooms of the municipality. The home cooking, however, was almost altogether in the hands of the Negro cook, Victor, who had been with the family since childhood. Victor had one bad weakness—that of going on an occasional drunk which lasted a week. When this happened we had to find our meals elsewhere. Once the drunken cycle was broken, Victor was back on the job as always and the rice and beans had the characteristic flavor. Victor certainly knew how to give food a tasty flavor, and once we became accustomed to his food, we almost preferred it to American food—provided we did not watch Victor too closely in the preparation.

Victor never prepared meals for a particular time, but always waited until we came before beginning preparations. It made no difference if we came separately or if we came as a group. If we came separately he prepared as many breakfasts. Neither did it matter what time we appeared for meals, except that we should never expect breakfast before nine o'clock. We could get breakfast served any time after nine o'clock and lunch any time after twelve, and the evening meal any time after dark. If Victor happened not to be in the kitchen when we were ready to eat, he could always be found in the country store and always came willingly to prepare the meal. Victor's methods of preparing and serving meals were typically Puerto Rican. Had we boarded in almost any other home where meals were prepared by servants the story would have been much the same. We learned early to adjust to the peculiar differences and within a short time we ate and enjoyed platanos, rice and beans, rice and chicken, goat and guinea pig, etc. Though we welcomed an American cook to our unit we did miss the usual dishes of rice and beans two times a day.

The first Sunday at La Plata was a lonesome day. There was no Sunday school, no church, no radio church programs, no car, no one to talk with except ourselves—and we were miles from home. What could we do to pass the lonesome Sunday afternoon hours? One suggestion—and it was agreed that we would climb the mountain west of the project. Following are the words of Nachtigall describing the afternoon's experience.

"When the sun is not hiding its bright face behind white, fleecy clouds, it is beating down quite unmercifully upon two perspiring figures who are climbing laboriously up the steep slope of one of Puerto Rico's many mountains. . . .

"Now we have reached a little hut. It is someone's little thatched-roof home, perched precariously on stilts at the very edge of the mountainside. We wonder how it manages to cling to the side of the slope, for it seems as though even a little breeze might topple it into the ravine below. Two little urchins peer out at us suspiciously from the





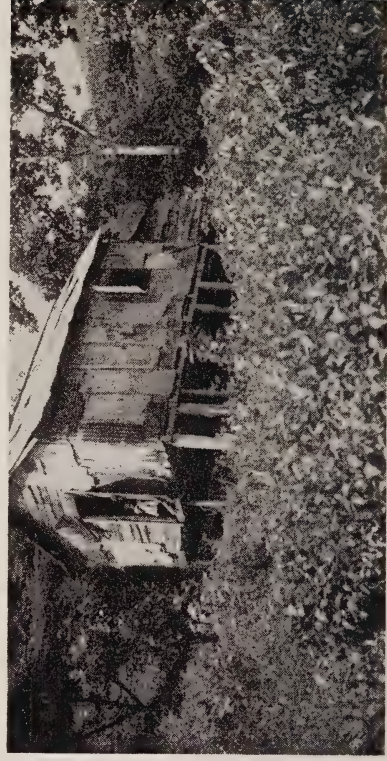
Mosquito netting protected young tobacco plants for the Tobacco Institute of Puerto Rico. This land is now a part of the Memmonite farm.



Many Puerto Ricans scrub their laundry in the cold water of a near-by stream.



A tobacco field at La Plata.



A shack built from discarded tin and boards often houses a family of six to twelve.



squalid interior of their hovel, so we decide to move on lest we trespass on someone's front yard.

"Another tough climb—up! up! up! The brambles cling to our clothes, and sharp leaves cut our faces and arms. Our persistence finally lands us squarely in a patch of corn. Someone is raising corn on the sheer slope of the mountain! We even encountered difficulty trying to stand upright, and here we discover a Puerto Rican farmer raising corn! But such are the farms of Puerto Rico—a patchwork of fields, spread out on the mountainside. . . .

"Sprawling over the floor of the valley is the La Plata project, the scene of our work. It received its name from Rio La Plata. You and I would say 'The Silver River.' This sparkling little stream winds its way along the valley bed, and then loses itself in the mountains.

"I am glad we came. I am glad we did not despair halfway up the slope. New horizons are usually gained only through real effort and hard work. And this horizon has given us a new glimpse of Puerto Rico. Here, so near the clouds, let us worship God with a Psalm: 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.' And we came away with a prayer, 'Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.'"

Thus took place the first Mennonite worship service in Puerto Rico, on the top of the mountain to the west of the project, in the cool afternoon breeze. As we descended the mountain we got a clear view of the hundreds of little houses that dotted the mountainsides and valley, inhabited by the most beautiful of God's creation—human souls. The view was very beautiful, and yet quite ugly in all its beauty, with the poverty, disease, and sin so common within so many of the little homes. That afternoon's experiences gave us new vision, new determination, and renewed energy to throw ourselves into a service whose aim was to bring a better way of life to the people of the La Plata Valley.

News of the transfer of three men from the golden cornfields of Camp Grottoes, Virginia, to La Plata, Puerto Rico, was well received by us at La Plata. James Hean, Carl M. Lehman, and Carl Epp arrived in Puerto Rico, September 9, 1943. All of these men had attended the Goshen Relief Training School in preparation for relief work. Hean, of Philadelphia, was assigned to community recreation; Epp, a graduate agronomist of Henderson, Nebraska, was assigned to agriculture work; Lehman, of Berne, Indiana, was to be business manager. With the coming of these men Coston was released from La Plata to return to Castaner. With Coston's leaving, I took charge of the community education program.

When we were assigned to Puerto Rico our instructions were to

develop a community program patterned after that of Castañer's. A study of the program at Castañer revealed that medical service was the heart of the total program. It was likewise felt that medical service should be a prominent part of the La Plata program. Early in July news was received from Akron that the MCC had been able to secure a doctor for Puerto Rico. Dr. and Mrs. Delbert V. Preheim arrived in Puerto Rico, September 11, 1943. Dr. Preheim was appointed medical director to develop the medical phase of the program and Mrs. Preheim was appointed unit matron.

The Preheims spent three weeks in Castañer to become acquainted with the medical problems of Puerto Rico, and to assist in the Castañer hospital, making it possible for their doctors to take a much-needed vacation. At the end of these three weeks, Mrs. Preheim joined our group, whereas Dr. Preheim spent a week in San Juan becoming acquainted with the Island medical personnel, and ten days at the PRRA Lafayette Hospital assisting in an emergency caused by a fire.

One of our first problems in initiating the La Plata program was that of housing. The original plan was that we single men should occupy one side of the bunkhouse and the medical clinic should be conducted in the other side. Dr. and Mrs. Preheim were scheduled to occupy several rooms in the PRRA co-ordinator's house. This arrangement did not appear too satisfactory and an effort was made to secure the Tobacco Institute's house (now the director's house) as living quarters for the doctor's family and any single nurses who might be assigned later. Though the Institute was unwilling to turn over the dwelling, they consented to turn over their office building (now Leelo Cottage) as living quarters for the doctor's family and single women.

With some alterations and remodeling this house became a very nice home and the front room became the unit social room, the scene of many unit gatherings. The lateness in securing the building made it impossible to have it in livable condition when Mrs. Preheim arrived. One of the first surprises to the local women of La Plata was to see Mrs. Preheim on her hands and knees scrubbing floors, washing windows, painting walls, etc. Even a greater surprise came later when they saw an American doctor with saw, hammer, pick, and shovel. It is rather uncommon in Puerto Rico to find individuals willing to do manual labor when qualified to do mental work.

In the latter months of 1943 the Castañer project witnessed three tragedies which brought sadness to all of the workers of the Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit. On the morning of September 12, Elmer Hartzler, a Mennonite CPS boy and member of the Castañer unit, drowned in a stream near the Castañer project. As he and some other boys were swimming in a cascade, he was overcome by the turbulent water and

drowned in spite of exhaustive efforts to save his life. His funeral was held in the Castañer chapel on September 15, and his body was interred in the Adjuntas municipal cemetery. The large crowd of people who attended the funeral to offer their tributes of respect and sympathy was a testimony to the excellent Christian life he lived among them. Father Pagán of the Episcopal mission read the Scripture and prayer, and Wilbur Nachtigall gave the obituary. As far as is known Hartzler was the first Mennonite to come to Puerto Rico, having arrived with the first Castañer group. He lived the word that he spoke when he made application for work in Puerto Rico.

"In view of the many sacrifices that have been made that we might enjoy freedom and spiritual life, I consider it only my reasonable service to present my life a living sacrifice to the furtherance of the eternal purposes of God."

On September 26, 1943, Harvey Horner, a member of the Castañer unit, died in the Presbyterian Hospital in Philadelphia. Horner came to Castañer in June with Wilbur Nachtigall and Theodore Haynes, and upon receiving his physical examination at Castañer several weeks later it was revealed that he had a chest tumor and could hardly live more than six months. Horner was a hospital patient during his stay in Puerto Rico, with the exception of the first two weeks preceding his physical examination. He returned to the States in September, accompanied by his father, but he did not reach his home in Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania. Though his stay in Puerto Rico was short, many were inspired by his fine Christian character and the cheerfulness and courage with which he faced his physical condition.

On November 26, 1943, Elzie Holderreed was accidentally electrocuted while attempting to restore electricity to the Castañer hospital, which had been without electricity for twenty hours. Though artificial respiration was used, he failed to respond, apparently having been killed instantly. His funeral was conducted the same evening as his death and he was buried early the following morning, in the Adjuntas cemetery beside the Hartzler grave. The two CPS graves almost hidden away in a corner of the Adjuntas cemetery are memorials to two young men who were willing to give their lives that others might live.

## **ESTABLISHING THE PROGRAM PATTERN**

The visits of Leland Brubaker in September, 1943, and Orie O. Miller in October to the respective projects, aided greatly in evaluating the beginning programs and in planning the future work. They had originally planned to come together, but because of transportation difficulties their visits were several weeks apart. Each of the men met



with individuals and groups to help in the further planning of the work. Besides visiting and surveying each project they conferred with PRRA officials and explained further the service ideas and objectives of the service committees. The newly organized unit at La Plata was encouraged by Orié O. Miller's visit since it was the first visit from an MCC official. He was introduced to the La Plata community at a regular "community get-together." "Helping us to do the dishes after meals, sleeping in the somewhat rickety Puerto Rican beds, and 'enduring' our perpetually cold showers, were touches which helped us appreciate this veteran relief worker, church leader, and shoe manufacturer. Discomforts seem smaller and opportunities larger since he has been with us."

The outline of convictions and conclusions as stated by Orié O. Miller helped to guide our unit in its thinking and future planning. His convictions were stated as follows:

"First, that the La Plata project is well begun and proceeding along acceptable lines; second, that the apparent social and economic needs in this Puerto Rican area and the consequent challenges and opportunities are significant from CPS and MCC viewpoints and warrant the best that CPS men and MCC can give it; third, that CPS service through PRRA interests, combined with supplemental MCC relief and reconstruction would seem practicable and not inconsistent with any responsibilities to Puerto Rico-CPS administration; fourth, that the supplemental service be programmed in line with MCC Relief Service policies already established and likewise related to the other Puerto Rico social and religious agencies and motivated in line with MCC constituency concerns."

Miller's conclusions were:

First, that for the La Plata area we look forward to a CPS unit of fifteen assignees and about four additional continental workers; second, that a nurse, an assignee laboratory technician and electrical engineer, and an assignee auto and general mechanic be sent in November; third, that appointed assignees Elmer Gingerich and Roman Gingerich be sent in December, the former to serve on maintenance and the latter in recreation; fourth, that the remaining members of the unit (four CPS men and two supplemental workers) be selected and sent between January 1 and April 1, 1944; fifth, that the budget to Puerto Rico be in terms of \$25 per month per CPS assignee to CPS and the balance to MCC relief funds—the relief funds to cover CPS transportation to the field and return; sixth, that the relief be planned toward a maximum budget of \$1,000 monthly, same to cover all allowances and costs from arrival in San Juan and depreciation on prerequisitioned equipment; seventh, that all liaison in Puerto Rico and with the Martin G. Brumbaugh unit and PRRA, or their additional subagents be via the MCC

unit director; eighth, that MCC appointed staff members (now including the unit director, business manager, medical director, and matron) co-operate through the director to MCC in the management of all MCC interests in Puerto Rico—Akron to assume that all policies or recommendations submitted have been previously submitted to and approved by all unit members unless otherwise noted; ninth, all unit members to be free at all times to contact the MCC executive secretary's office about personal matters without prejudice.

In an effort to acquaint all unit members of the various Brumbaugh subunits with tropical diseases, a four-day training course, beginning September 20, 1943, at the School of Tropical Medicine, was arranged by Robert Bogue, director of the Zalduondo subunit. Courses were given in causes, control, and prevention of tropical diseases. All of our La Plata unit members attended the school, as well as most of the members from the other subunits. Three lectures were given each afternoon on the following subjects: intestinal protozoa, bacillary dysentery, hookworm, schistosomiasis, tapeworm, malaria, tuberculosis, and venereal diseases. These courses helped us to appreciate the quality of work being done by the School of Tropical Medicine and also acquainted us with the techniques in the control of tropical diseases.

The learning of Spanish continued to be one of our major problems. With Coston's leaving we were without a teacher and the newcomers to the project were also in need of Spanish study. Our first plan was for one of the group to conduct the class each week. It took only several weeks to show us that such a system would not work, for how could the blind lead the blind? The principal of the second unit school at La Plata was quite willing to help us since he recognized that before we could be of much assistance to the community, we would need to be able to converse with the people. He thus appointed one of his grammar grade teachers, a girl seventeen years old who had just graduated from senior high school, to teach our Spanish class. He helped her in planning the class and had we as students labored as hard as the poor self-conscious teacher, we would have learned Spanish twice as rapidly. Our Spanish study continued in this manner for several months until the teacher transferred to another school. Various Spanish study classes were organized from time to time throughout the history of the unit. Sometimes they were taught by Puerto Ricans and sometimes by unit members who were only several jumps ahead of their students.

## THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

The mention of the word *tormenta* (hurricane) strikes terror to the hearts of the Puerto Ricans because the term literally means death and

destruction. One needs to be in Puerto Rico only a short time until he hears the stories of the terrible destruction wrought by these tropical disturbances. Those who experienced the hurricanes of 1928 and 1932 have vivid memories of the loss of their homes, crops, and in some instances relatives. Each year hurricanes pass through the Caribbean area. Some of them head toward Puerto Rico, in which case the weather bureau forewarns the people to take precautions and make preparations for the approaching storm.

On the morning of October 14, 1943, following several days of heavy rain, the weather bureau issued a bulletin asking the people to be on the alert for an approaching storm. We were warned that if the hurricane struck the Island directly little mountain houses would come tumbling down the mountain like boxes, trees would be laid to the ground, and we would probably be without water and electricity for weeks. The storm was scheduled to strike in the late afternoon and, being in San Juan on business, I found it unwise to return to La Plata. For once the people of San Juan were in a hurry, running here and there, boarding up windows, and securing doors. The city was in a feverish rush, with everyone making last-minute preparations. The La Plata community did not take on quite the same degree of excitement, since the *granjeros* have concrete hurricane-proof houses, and the unit had not grown in sufficient proportions in equipment and personnel to necessitate elaborate preparations.

When preparations were near completion, the weather bureau announced that the storm was by-passing the Island and that no further precautions were necessary. The storm traveled near the west coast but did not cause any serious damage to the Island, except for the loss of fertile soil washed away by the thirteen-inch rainfall in the four-day period. As our project increased in personnel and property the hurricane warnings were taken much more seriously than in 1943.

Those who have lived in rural Puerto Rico without frequently using the *guagua* (large rural bus) miss a great part of Puerto Rican life. One doesn't know the rural Puerto Rican until he has visited with him in his most democratic institution—the *guagua*. He who travels in his own car or by *publico* (public car) never really becomes acquainted with the country folk. Without the *guagua* how would the country folk get to town to buy the family clothing? How would the local farmer get his few chickens, his pig, his bag of sweet potatoes, to market? How would he get his sack of charcoal from town? How would his children get to high school? How would he exchange political ideas with his neighbor? The *guagua* is an indispensable institution to the rural people—and so it was with us until October when we bought our first unit vehicle. Previously we depended upon the *guagua* for our food, our mail, our cloth-



ing, and our contact with the outside world. Though our Spanish was poor, it seemed we could still strike up a conversation on the *guagua*. We were forced to abandon the *guagua* in favor of our Dodge coupe—not because we preferred to but because we were losing our individualities and becoming an “organization.” The purchase of the Dodge immediately put us into another classification. When the small boys of the community found out that all of the *Americanos* could actually *guiar* (drive) we were placed on a social level with chauffeurs and were no longer plain country *jibaros* (hill people) whose only means of transportation was the dependable old *guagua*.

Before entering the description of the program of service rendered by the Mennonites at La Plata during 1943, the reader should know something about the living conditions and the customs of the rural mountain people of Puerto Rico whom we came to serve. A true picture can best be related by those who worked closest with the people. One of the Castañer workers gives a very picturesque description of the Castañer community, which is characteristic of almost any rural community of Puerto Rico.

“Castañer holds you in a curious sort of fascination. You can see it, but you can’t describe it. You can know about it, but you cannot understand it. You can feel it, but you can’t transmit that feeling to another.

“To know Castañer you must drift to sleep to the happy music of the toads forever singing in the night. You need to rise in the early morning and lift your eyes to the rose-crowned mountain crests that seal you in this valley—and know that there is no road back from the purpose that brought you here. You need to watch the children, shabby and barefoot but proud and happy, chattering their way along the road. You need to stop and wonder at the great loads piled on their heads. You need to scan the jagged boundary of the horizon, black against a waning sunset, and love the beauty of the tiny box-like houses and the royal palms silhouetted against the flaming clouds. You need to sense the warmth of the earth and find human life about you, knowing that in both are contained those seeds that can bear fruit for the world’s needs. You need to find the thrill of believing in people, because they are people and understand that your faith is not predicated upon your knowledge of them, but upon the same divinity in their lives which fills yours and makes you a part of them. You need to see the eyes of the people staring questioningly at you as they confront you with diseased, infected, malnourished, worn-out bodies. You need to see the net hammock stretched from a long bamboo pole, swinging from the shoulders of two men who bring a relative or friend for treatment. You need to feel the aching in your heart and wonder at the futility of what to do when you send a freshly nourished child back to no milk and inadequate diet that

will return him to your care again; or to bid a boy or girl good-by, finally free from infection, knowing that he will return to a home environment of poverty and disease; or to hand out hookworm medicine to children already on their third and fourth treatment and send them away, their feet bare and exposed to the parasites you have eliminated from their stomachs. You need to see a tenth or fifteenth child born into a family, too poor after the first to support another, and helplessly watch the waning capacity of the worn-out mother to bring them up healthful and adequate for life.

"You need to touch the primitiveness of life around you and yet feel more secure in it than in your own city streets. You need to recognize poverty and inadequate standards of living all about you and be surprised at the lack of crime and the comparative safety of the roads you walk.

"And finally your head will buzz, your mind will wonder frantically, 'What can be done? What can be done? Why am I here?' And some evening you will bow your head with the setting sun, thankful in the knowledge that in the midst of ignorance you have learned much; in the midst of suffering you have found great joy; and from out of poverty you have been abundantly filled. Then the mystery of Castañer will break over you and fill you with strange humility and you will seek a new courage for the opportunity of meeting tomorrow's dawn." The writer of this quotation has put into expressive words the feelings that all have experienced who have labored to relieve the existing conditions of Puerto Rico.

No place on earth can one find a more hospitable people than the Puerto Ricans. Whether they are rich or poor, they will put forth every effort to make you feel at home among them. If the home is only a little mountain shack it is *a sus órdenes* (at your service). No amount of expense or trouble is too much when guests need to be entertained. One of the first workers to La Plata relates an interesting visit into one of the homes of the community soon after his arrival, which helps to show how hospitable a people the rural folk of Puerto Rico are.

"Late in the evening, Bill, Eduardo, and I were invited into the home of a near-by farmer for supper. The conversation prior to suppertime was in Spanish, and I did my best to nod and smile my approval—and laugh when they laughed. Supper was a most interesting experience; the menu: fried bananas (which slid down the esophagus with unusual difficulty in spite of the fact that they were saturated with oil), delicious tomatoes and peppers, codfish, spareribs, rice, beans, corned beef, and black coffee. Hospitality was excellent. . . . It gave me an excellent insight into the different conditions of poverty in which these people live. Sanitation and wholesome food are two prominent problems.

"Later in the evening we attended a Catholic religious ceremony. It is called the *Rosario* and consists of the chanting of the Rosary. This experience, combined with the supper meal, provided an excellent introduction into rural Puerto Rican life."

Many of the country people are highly superstitious. The center of the Catholic religion is in the town, and many of the country people did not become as well indoctrinated with the Catholic doctrines as their urban neighbors. Some of the country people attend Catholic religious gatherings only several times a year, and the smattering of religious belief which they receive from the church is closely coupled with superstitions passed down from generation to generation. Some of their religious beliefs show superstitious characteristics that were probably inherited from their Indian ancestors. Thus the culture of the rural people is a combination of Indian, Spanish, and Negro traditions. The belief in spirits is very common among the rural people, whether Protestant or Catholic. The fact that a spirit may enter the body and cause illness is commonly accepted. Thus many families prefer the charms of spiritists to the treatments of doctors. Many will turn to the physician only as a measure of last resort when the spiritists cannot cure the ill. The "guarda cuerpo," a medal of a saint, is worn by large numbers of people to drive away evil spirits. The sign of the cross is commonly made to protect against approaching danger. Their religious devotion to a saint is often far more pagan and superstitious than religious and sacred.

The service for the dead is one of the fixed traditions of the people, portraying a peculiar mixture of superstition and religion. The last minutes of the dying person are accompanied by great manifestations of pain and sorrow by all the family. The night following the death, the Catholic Rosario is conducted, in which prayers are offered to the various saints in behalf of the soul which has just entered purgatory. The following day the body is carried in procession to the municipal cemetery of the town where it is interred. The procession is usually composed of men, who give no appearance of mourning as they walk along chatting on any subject of the day. Each man takes his turn at helping to carry the casket, inasmuch as the distance from the home to the cemetery is often from five to ten miles.

The spirit of sympathy for relatives who have lost loved ones is similar to that found among rural people in America a generation ago when funerals drew overflow crowds to churches. When death visits a rural family in Puerto Rico, almost every acquaintance assembles at the home for the Rosario, and on the day of the burial a corresponding number join in the procession to lend a hand in carrying the body to the town cemetery. If the family has considerable means, the priest with his altar boys meets the procession at the bridge outside of town





and accompanies the body to the church where the priest performs a brief ceremony and then accompanies the body and mourners about halfway to the cemetery, chanting as the procession passes along the town streets. If the family is extremely poor and cannot afford to pay the church fee, the body is taken directly to the cemetery. When a small child dies, frequently the father makes a small casket himself, and carries it on his head to the cemetery, accompanied by a few close friends. There is a saying among the country people, "Man goes all his life struggling in the hard earth, and every step he takes puts him one step nearer the grave."

Many superstitions regarding doctors and medicines have been on the decrease since the introduction of modern medicine among the rural people. There are still many rural communities, however, where the people are superstitious concerning doctors and the medicines which they administer. Various quotations of rural people taken from notations made by PRRA social workers as they worked in the rural regions give an idea of the nature of the superstitions that still prevail in many regions.

"There are four spiritist doctors in this barrio. Mrs. M— is the most learned. Every Sunday you can see eight or ten horses in her front yard. They belong to people who come from other barrios to get cured." "The best medicine for a headache is to take some sage leaves and put them over the forehead. It is better than any aspirin or other medicine for it cures the ailment even if it comes from a spirit." "Coming back to the question of my hoarseness, I went to the doctor and he told me that my throat glands were swollen, but I did not pay any attention to him and I am using my own remedies, for I do not believe in anything the doctors say." "I would rather let my daughter die, than call a doctor. I know they will say that she is anemia without even seeing her." "I can't believe that a doctor who works for a sugar central has any pity for children of the poor." "I have a medicine for all diseases; a bath in the river, blue soap, and rum. When I feel as if I'm going to catch a cold, I take a bath and get well. When I have a sore or wound I don't use mercurochrome or iodine. I rub it with blue soap instead and get cured. As to malaria and all types of fever, my only medicine is rum. The higher the fever the more rum I drink. Next day I don't even remember that I was ill." "The best treatment for colics, evil eye, infraction of glands, and spasms is to call a person who knows how to bless." "I had a child with rickets, but we treated her with coconut oil and she got cured." "I have a good many children. That one over

A funeral in procession from the country home to the town cemetery.

Courtesy of Government of Puerto Rico. Photo by Rotkin

there is enrolled in school; but he is dying. I have been unable to take him to the doctor; but since I believe in God, everything will come out well."

From this it can be seen that the beliefs of many country people are a combination of superstitions, religious fatalism, ignorance, and mistrust of strangers. All of these factors must be taken into consideration in planning a program for the rural people. What they need more than pills is a knowledge of their bodies and the proper methods of caring for them. What they need more than medicine is a knowledge of medical science; what they need more than food itself is a knowledge of foods and their relation to the body; what they need more than games, is a demonstration of honesty and sportsmanship in playing; what they need more than religious creeds and dogmas, is the daily experience of Christ's guiding and directing their lives to higher levels of living. Any program designed to minister only to the surface ills of the people will have no lasting effect upon their lives. Many agencies have attempted and are attempting to solve the social, economic, religious and health problems of Puerto Rico, and little by little progress can be seen. A unified program of education, coupled with the Christian philosophy of life, touching every phase of life, seems to be the only answer to Puerto Rico's problems. Thus the Brethren, Friends, and Mennonites entered Puerto Rico with service programs designed to minister to the social, physical, spiritual, and mental needs of the rural people.

## **THE PROGRAM TAKES FORM**

Our assignment to Puerto Rico was to render a service to the rural people "in the name of Christ," which in the eyes of Selective Service must be of "national importance." The exact nature of our program was not clearly stated except that it should be patterned rather closely after the medical and community program at Castañer. The Castañer program, when we arrived at La Plata, was of a twofold nature: the medical program centering around a twenty-four bed rural hospital, and a community-service program centering around the community center. Their medical program after sixteen months of operation recorded 5,849 inpatient hospital days with a total of 885 hospital admissions, and the performance of 923 operations. There were only sixteen deaths from the total number of hospital admissions, of which seven occurred within twenty-four hours after admission. The outpatient hospital department showed a record of 1,735 patient visits and the two rural dispensaries 8,885 visits. The community-center program consisted of organized and supervised recreation, special community meetings, boys' and girls' clubs, classes, and a small community library.



The experiences of Castañer were valuable to the La Plata personnel in planning a program to minister to the needs of the community. We were directed from Akron headquarters to start a two-phase program—medical service and community building. The detailed organization of these two phases of service were worked out by our island personnel in line with the existing community needs. Before launching a program we made a study of our area of service so as to become well acquainted with the total needs of the people.

The total La Plata Project, located in the La Plata Valley, consisted of some 4,600 acres of land, almost all of which was treeless as a result of several decades of tobacco production. Much of the land was rather seriously depleted from tobacco culture, though PRRA and the Soil Conservation Service did much to restore the soil fertility. The total La Plata Project touched four municipalities: Aibonito, Cayey, Cidra, and Comerío. Living within this total area were 362 *granjeros*, operating their little *parcelas* which included a government constructed concrete house of four rooms, a small granary, sanitary toilet, and from five to seven acres of land, all of which the *granjero* might use in the production of food for his family or for cash crops.

When the land was purchased from the American Tobacco Suppliers, one of the problems PRRA faced was what to do with the numerous squatters who had settled on the land during the depression. These squatters were resettled in small communities, at Buena Vista (Cayey), Toita (Matón), Pasarell (Comerío), and Rincón (Nogueras). The squatters paid a \$1.00 a month rent for the small frame house and hired themselves out as laborers.

The total La Plata Project, opened for a Mennonite Central Committee service program, thus consisted of the La Plata Central Service farm—a part of which was still operated by PRRA; the Matón PRRA project, the Buena Vista project, the Rincón project, and the Pasarell project. The La Plata central service farm area became the center of our service, with plans to expand our program into the other communities as facilities and personnel permitted. Living within this immediate vicinity were seventy-two PRRA families and about an equal number of non-PRRA families. It was to these people that we felt our first obligation of service. Within the La Plata community, PRRA made available to the MCC the following facilities: a furnished concrete community center building, a plaza with sidewalk and playing equipment for small children, a lighted concrete volleyball and basketball court, a softball field, a bunkhouse of six rooms for single men, and an agriculture warehouse (later changed into a clinic and hospital).

The Matón community center and Toita medical dispensary and school were located about five miles from La Plata on the road to Cayey.

In this community lived 115 *granjeros*. The Buena Vista community, located just outside of Cayey, also consisted of a community center building and medical dispensary, and seventy-three *granjas* (farms). The Rincón (Nogueras) settlement was located midway between Cayey and Cidra and consisted of a medical dispensary, community center and sixty-eight *granjas*. The Pasarell settlement was located at Comerío with fifty-four *granjas*, a community center, and medical dispensary.

These five PRRA communities were opened to the Mennonite Central Committee for the conducting of a service program. Our program was not limited to the *granjeros* (resettlers) since there were many non-PRRA homes adjoining the PRRA projects.

Our general objective of service in Puerto Rico was the same as the Mennonite Central Committee objective of service in its total program of relief and service in the various regions of the world: "The Christian must follow Christ completely in a life of love, peace, and nonresistance, believing that constructive nonresistance means overcoming evil with good. . . . They [Mennonites] have sought to live and testify to a way of life from which the use of force and compulsion is completely eliminated, whether in international, class or personal relations, and is replaced by a creative expression of love and spiritual power which follows from the experience and regeneration and discipleship through faith in Jesus Christ and the possession of the indwelling spirit of God. They have sought the solution of concrete social and economic problems in the application of principles derived from the teachings of the Bible, and have viewed the church as a universal Christian brotherhood in which Christ is Lord and to which all men should be invited." Thus the Mennonite Central Committee sought to achieve its objective through a service program designed to minister to the spiritual, physical, social, and mental needs of the people of Puerto Rico, in the spirit of Christian love and "in the name of Christ."

As the membership of our unit increased we were able to organize more religious activities among the unit members. We did not undertake direct religious work with the people for several reasons. First, we were not sufficiently versed in language to undertake a direct religious program, and second, we were not sure if Selective Service would permit direct religious work in the community by CPS men. Each worker was motivated from religious convictions and had a deep concern that an organized church would be the outgrowth of our services. Our work as CPS men was to sow the seeds of love and good will through our services rendered to the people in the name of Christ and in the spirit of Christian love. That we frequently fell short in interpreting the love of Christ to our community, we do not deny.

The concern of the early workers in presenting Christ to the people

is shown in a quotation from one of the workers in an article written soon after the beginning of the program. "Is the Mennonite Church ready with the answer?" (Speaking of the terrible social and spiritual conditions.) "What will it be? Again and again we are told by the government officials, by university professors, by the people themselves, that what they really need more than anything else is Jesus Christ. They need the power of God to transform their lives. The church has too long neglected them. The hour is late. As we labor among them in the La Plata Valley we hope above all else that some day soon the Mennonite Church will open a mission field here. . . .

"We are living among them and working with them, trying to lay the best kind of foundation for the day when there will be a church here. . . . Many of the people know us as Mennonites. We hope they will think of Mennonites as a good kind of 'Americano,' and we want them to know the essentials of being a Mennonite are the essentials of the Christian faith and the life in Christ. So, whether there will be a church here or not, we will want to keep on living and working that way—but we hope there will be a church!"

Each week the unit had several Sunday-school classes followed by a regular Sunday morning worship service conducted by the director. A midweek prayer meeting was organized in which we discussed together religious issues and united our hearts together in asking God's blessings upon His work. A daily devotional period was conducted at the morning meal. Each member took his turn in presenting a thought for the day from the Scriptures.

The first Thanksgiving Day in Puerto Rico was a day that will long be remembered by those who were in the unit at that time. We had often been told that the town of Comerío was just across the mountain several hours. (Puerto Ricans measure distance in the time it takes to walk it rather than in miles or kilometers.) The three of us, Nachtigall, Schrag, and I, agreed that Thanksgiving Day being a holiday we would hike to Comerío. We left La Plata about 8:00 a.m., with a warm November sun pouring in on our backs as we climbed the hills in the direction of the river. After about an hour's travel along the river we came to the fork of the path, one path following the river and the other the mountain. Schrag and I decided to take the path following the stream and Nachtigall took the path over the mountain. We followed the winding Río La Plata around mountain after mountain, hoping each time to see the town of Comerío. We saw Comerío in the distance after having become almost completely exhausted from walking what seemed like many miles. When we told the people living along the path that we had walked from La Plata, the expression on their faces was much the same as if we had told them we came from another planet.



We finally arrived at Comerío at twelve o'clock. We mutually decided that Nachtigall must have turned back because he had resorted to using a bamboo pole as a cane already when we left him. After refreshing ourselves with a few oranges, we searched the town for Nachtigall but with no success. We therefore decided to take the only afternoon *guagua*, which left at 1:00 p.m. We arrived at La Plata about 3:30 p.m., expecting to find our third partner asleep on his bunk. We were informed that he had not been seen since he left with us in the morning. Thinking that he might have stopped along the way to visit in homes we made no effort to search for him until about five o'clock. Our matron had prepared a delicious Thanksgiving dinner and everything was in readiness to eat, but how could we sit down to eat our first chicken dinner with visions of our companion lying along the stream with a broken leg or perhaps having fallen from a ledge into the stream? Thus the two surviving parties to the hike set out over the hills in search of the missing one. We retraced almost half of our morning hike but seeing no signs of our lost companion, and with darkness approaching we decided to return to La Plata. When we got back, there was still no word from the lost one. We decided to begin our Thanksgiving dinner anyway, but the vacant chair at the table could not be dismissed from our minds.

When we were almost ready for the second piece of chicken we received word via telephone that we could dismiss our worries—our missing companion was guest at the Aibonito Lions Club. How did it happen? Well, it was something like this: The high mountain road was the short way to Comerío, and Nachtigall arrived in Comerío fully an hour ahead of the other two hikers. He went to the PRRA project just outside of town to await the arrival of his two companions, and in due time missed transportation out of Comerío. Finally finding a ride from Comerío about 3:00 p.m., he arrived at Aibonito too late in the evening for the last *guagua* to La Plata and thus set out to hike the five miles home. In the course of his hike he was met by the PRRA co-ordinator, who persuaded Nachtigall that it would be much better to accompany him to the Lions Club banquet than to hike to La Plata alone in the night. With a borrowed suit, our director hobnobbed with the big men of the municipality and was called upon to give an after-dinner speech at the club. There, among such men as the mayor, school superintendent, and leading town merchants, he told of the Mennonites. A number of the men who were present on this occasion were later some of our close friends and influential in helping us get our program established. What a Thanksgiving!

Four new men arrived at the unit in December, 1943. N. Paul Stucky and Ervin Warkentin came December 8, and Elmer and Roman Gingerich on December 18. Stucky of Kansas became the first hospital

laboratory and X-ray technician; Warkentin, of California, was in charge of maintenance and construction; Elmer Gingerich, of Ohio, took charge of the laundry and helped on construction; Roman Gingerich, of Iowa, assisted in the recreational program. All of these men were veterans of base CPS camps and were well prepared to assume the duties of a rapidly expanding community rehabilitation program. With the addition of more CPS men, the bunkhouse took on more and more the nature of a CPS barracks with its late bull sessions, acrobatic stunts, hair-raising tales, and early morning solos.

The community building program was organized to render three types of service to the community: community education, community recreation, and agriculture extension. The community building program sought to do the following things: first, provide opportunity for advantageous use of leisure, mental and physical growth, and educational development; second, encourage activities that provide economic benefit to members of the community and that improve the home environment; third, cultivate friendships among the neighbors of the community and between the unit and the community; fourth, provide opportunities for the discussion of community problems and encourage measures for the solution of these problems; fifth, develop leadership ability and foster the appreciation of high moral values, through group activities and individual contacts; sixth, provide an avenue of spiritual contact with the community. The recreational phase of the community building program attempted to develop a high quantity of human relations by encouraging good sportsmanship, teamwork, and leadership ability. The agricultural phase sought to encourage the production of animals and garden products through the organized 4-H club. The agriculture program also assisted the community in securing good quality seeds.

During the last six months of 1943, an extensive community center program was organized, consisting of classes in English, nutrition, and agriculture. Some of the classes were conducted by trained personnel from the University of Puerto Rico extension service working in cooperation with the unit. Around fifty people of the community were in attendance in community center classes. The community center library of 138 volumes and thirteen magazines and daily paper was widely used by the community. The library was open each afternoon for reading and checking out books. Educational films were shown from time to time in the community center with an average attendance of around 200. Music clubs and classes were also organized in the local La Plata Second Unit School. A boys' orchestra was trained to make its own instruments and play the accompaniment for an organized girls' chorus. These two groups gave a number of public performances together in the community center and at special school activities.

The community center recreational program consisted of supervised and organized games, including volleyball, basketball, softball, ping-pong, checkers, dominoes, horseshoe, and badminton. The organized program of physical education and recreation was also begun in the La Plata school by the recreational director. The community center was open for community recreation from 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., with a supervised night program of special games. Each evening was scheduled for certain classes, club meetings, and special games for certain age groups. Saturday night was designated as community night, when the entire family came to the center for special programs after which light refreshments were served.

A well organized 4-H club began functioning in 1943, under the leadership of the unit agronomist, Carl Epp. The club had a membership of thirty-six boys with their respective projects of pigs, chickens, garden plots, etc. The club was a part of the agriculture extension service of the Island but our agronomist furnished the local leadership so essential to the success of the club. A girls' 4-H club was also organized and operated in close co-operation with the boys' club sponsored by Epp.<sup>14</sup>

In the month of November, 1943, two and one-half bales of clothing were distributed to the community through the La Plata school administration. The clothing was a gift to the Martin G. Brumbaugh Unit from friends in the States through the Brethren Service Commission, who made it available to Puerto Rico. Though some clothing was later distributed on several occasions through the public welfare milk station, it was never encouraged very strongly by the unit. There was no question that clothing was a great need of many rural people, but the mild climate made it possible for poor people to get along with a minimum of clothing. It was generally felt that direct relief was only a temporary solution to the problem of poverty which had grown over a period of many years.

Many years ago a certain man was traveling a lonely road between two cities and fell among robbers who stripped him of his possessions and left him severely wounded beside the road to die. Two persons passed by with hearts of stone, but the third, a Samaritan with a heart full of love, had compassion on the dying man and stooped to minister to his physical needs. The answer to the question of who was the good neighbor is self-evident. The same good neighbor policy, as exemplified by the Samaritan years ago, should likewise be the good neighbor policy of all Christian believers today. The easing of an ache, the healing of a wound, the sympathy of a tender smile—coming from a heart of love are tokens of peace

The La Plata community center serves the Mennonite community building program.

Courtesy of PRRA





in any civilization. These tokens of love find universal response, in spite of differences in language, creed, and customs.

Soon after our arrival in La Plata people began coming to us with their wounds, infections, and pains. Sometimes as many as five came in a single day. One day it was a little girl named Elsa with her finger cut off by a machete; another day a schoolgirl with an ear infection from an earring. These our neighbors had faith in us though none of us then had medical training, but we did have a simple knowledge of diseases and infections. People were coming to us with their health needs rather than to the community medical dispensary which was attended by a graduate nurse.

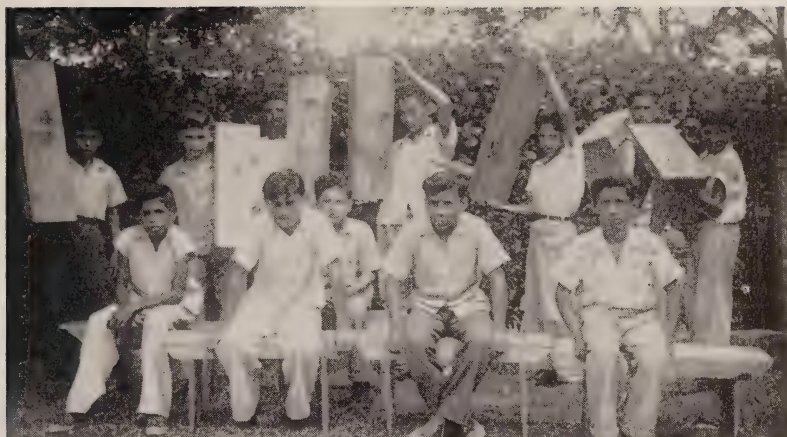
We could not turn away our neighbors who were coming to us with their pains and infections. We therefore opened a little first-aid station in one side of the boys' bunkhouse. It was equipped with hot water, aspirin, iodine, cotton, and band-aids. Through these small acts of kindness we were able to establish our purposes in the hearts of the people about us whom we had come to serve. Previous to the opening of the medical clinic by the unit doctor, first-aid treatments were rendered by various unit members to 223 people of the community.

Before opening a medical clinic a study was made of the medical needs of the community in order that we might plan an effective medical program to adequately meet the needs of the people. Dr. Preheim, the first medical director, believed that the health problems of Puerto Rico were largely due to poverty, ignorance, and overpopulation—the combination of which tended to operate in a perpetual cycle. Population was on the increase, and with the population increase, poverty also increased, and poverty bred ignorance. Many people were sick because they were too poor to provide themselves with adequate living essentials and medical care. They did not possess the knowledge to improve their economic status, and as long as they were chronically ill and undernourished they were unable to acquire knowledge to improve their economic status.

Dr. Preheim therefore proposed a medical program that would break into the cycle at two spots—education and health. There is no point in treating abscesses or skin infections if the people are not shown how to care for their infections and that cleanliness prevents them. Members of their own group need to be trained in medical care. Every woman who is taught and made to appreciate knowledge in home nursing, and every girl who is taught practical nursing becomes a focus for perpetuating and disseminating that knowledge in the community. Education therefore is basic in our medical program.

To promote this idea most effectively, Dr. Preheim proposed a small community hospital for several basic reasons. First, the hospital could





Boys' Club members display their products.



Softball is a favorite game in the community.



A community ball team. Players' conduct has improved markedly in recent years.



serve as a center for personnel training in health. Second, a small hospital is essential to a rural community because of the great shortage of hospital beds on the island to accommodate patients who need hospitalization from rural regions. Many rural people needed hospitalization but could not secure it because of the lack of hospital facilities.

It was therefore proposed that a twenty- or thirty-bed hospital be located at La Plata, where it would become the base of operations in taking care of cases needing hospitalization from each of the medical dispensaries of the five PRRA communities. With additional medical personnel the dispensaries could be staffed by Mennonite doctors, and a high quality of medical service could be given to the total La Plata PRRA project.

In line with Dr. Preheim's recommendations the aims of the medical program were listed as follows: First, medical office and clinic be established, equipped for routine examinations and treatments, first aid, minor surgery, general medicine, prenatal care, obstetrical service, and ambulatory pediatric work; second, provide a laboratory for routine urine, blood, stool, and sputum examinations, with expansion of service as the way opens; third, expand the surgical and medical program if and when hospital facilities are available; fourth, expand into such related fields as dental care and hygiene, if and as soon as it is deemed practical; fifth, expand into other parts of the La Plata project as soon as possible without handicapping the efficiency of the initial program and as facilities are available.

To carry forward on the proposed medical program, PRRA made available one end of a long agriculture machinery warehouse. With the help of PRRA labor, eight rooms were made available for dispensary use and arranged with a view toward adapting them into a hospital later. From the date of Dr. Preheim's arrival in La Plata, October 25, until December 1, 1943, no planned medical program was in operation because of the lack of medical facilities and of the construction work on the clinic end of the building. Only incidental calls and emergency cases were seen.

Though still lacking in equipment, the clinic opened its doors to patients December 1, 1943. During the month of December, 186 patients were registered, not including return visits. During the first ten days of the month the doctor worked alone in the clinic. Miss Carmen Ríos, a high-school graduate, was hired to interpret for him. December 9, N. Paul Stucky arrived to assist in the medical program as laboratory technician. An analysis of the clinic registry for the month of December revealed that the teeth condition of the people was extremely bad and that a high per cent of the people were infected with intestinal parasites and that many were anemic.

## THREE

### Rural Service

The Brumbaugh Reconstruction program was expanded into the Virgin Islands in the early months of 1944. Units were begun in the islands of St. Thomas and St. Croix. These units followed much the same types of work as the Puerto Rican units. Howard Gustafson arrived January, 1944, to direct the programs of the Virgin Islands. Though they were patterned somewhat after those of Puerto Rico their personnel needs were less since the Virgin Island units did not administer rural hospitals. The Zalduondo project also did not include a rural hospital as did the La Plata and Castañer units. The medical program at Zalduondo consisted of medical clinics in the Department of Health dispensaries. Their community service program was similar to that of Castañer and La Plata with somewhat more emphasis on crafts. During the year of 1944, the Zalduondo community service program was expanded into the St. Just community where a subunit was begun.

The years of 1944 and 1945 were the two expansion years of the Mennonite Central Committee program in Puerto Rico. In 1944 the Mennonite General Hospital was opened for medical service. During the following year the medical program was expanded into the communities of Toita (Matón), Buena Vista (Cayey), Rincón (Nogueras), and Pulguillas. The community building program was expanded into the communities of Buena Vista, Rincón, Cidra, Asomante, and Comerío. Additional facilities were needed to conduct such an extensive program. A number of CPS men, though some of them had been assigned to other work, assisted in the construction work of the hospital, dining room, garage, cowbarn, dormitory, doctor's residence, and numerous other small construction projects. Before the end of 1945, construction was begun on a chapel for unit and community worship.

#### PERSONNEL IN A GROWING PROGRAM

The expanding of the community building and medical programs during 1944 and 1945 called for a rapid increase in personnel. The total unit membership at the beginning of 1944 was twelve. By the end of

the year it had increased to thirty-nine. By the end of 1945, fifty-four continental workers had been assigned to service in Puerto Rico, some of whom had completed their term of service and returned to the States. Nine branches of the Mennonite Church and several other denominations were represented among the workers, who came from thirteen states and two Canadian provinces. Thus the La Plata Mennonite Project became a little melting pot of the various Mennonite groups living together as a small Mennonite community, surrounded by a foreign culture. Though the workers represented various Mennonite groups they had a common purpose; namely, to render a service to the people of Puerto Rico "In the Name of Christ," and in the spirit of Christian love.

Grace Kauffman (Nachtigall) of Iowa joined the unit in January, 1944, becoming the first nurse for the medical program. She assisted the doctor in the clinic and when the hospital was completed, she became its first superintendent. The big personnel increase took place the following spring. Orie Gingerich, Iowa, and Richard Weaver, Indiana, arrived in March, the former to work in the laundry and kitchen and the latter in the hospital laboratory and pharmacy. Albert Bohrer, Illinois, Naomi Shank, Virginia, and Earl Maust, Michigan, joined the unit in April. Bohrer was assigned as community recreation leader; Miss Shank, hospital and unit dietitian; and Maust, hospital attendant. Salome Fast (Holsinger), Minnesota, arrived in May and became the second nurse in the medical program. Marvin Dyck, Kansas, and Robert Ehret, Indiana, arrived in July and were assigned to the medical program as hospital attendants. Mrs. Richard Weaver also came in July, to teach in the La Plata public school.

During the month of August, 1944, twelve continental workers arrived to become associated with the La Plata Mennonite Project. They were as follows; Carol Glick, Ohio, teacher in Barranquitas Baptist Academy; Hugh Hostetler, Kansas, laboratory assistant; Roland Kaufman, Kansas, recreation leader; Harry Weirich, Indiana, cook; Victor Buller, Minnesota, community education leader; Clarence Joe Unruh, Kansas, laundryman and mechanic; Carol Diller, Ohio, nurse; Royal Snyder, Michigan, laundryman; Mrs. Victor Buller, Kansas, teacher in Barranquitas Baptist Academy; Wyman Sundheimer, Ohio, cook, and Dr. and Mrs. Earl Stover, Pennsylvania, dentist and dental hygienist. This was the largest influx of workers in any one month of the entire history of the Mennonite Project. Lucille Roth, Ohio, arrived in September to serve as nurse. Dr. H. Clair Amstutz, Indiana, and Ophia Sevits (Snyder), Indiana, arrived in October. Dr. Amstutz assisted in the medical program and was assistant to the unit director. Miss Sevits was the fourth nurse in the medical program. Those arriving in December, 1944, were: Mrs. Orie Gingerich, Pennsylvania, hospital attendant; Dr. and Mrs.

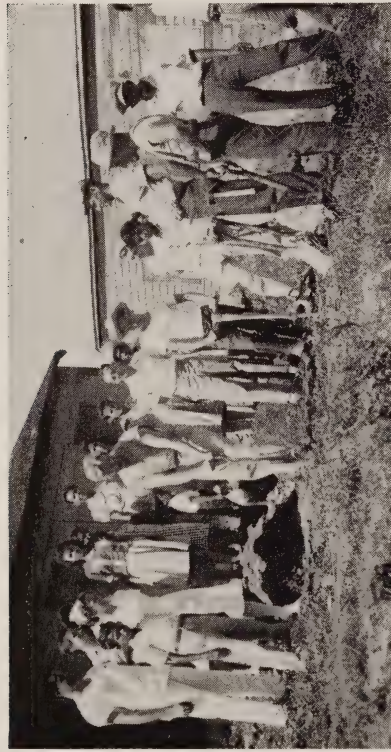


George Troyer, Illinois, and son Weldon and granddaughter Karen. Dr. Troyer took over the clinics of the Rincón and Buena Vista Health Department dispensaries, and Mrs. Troyer was matron of the Buena Vista unit.

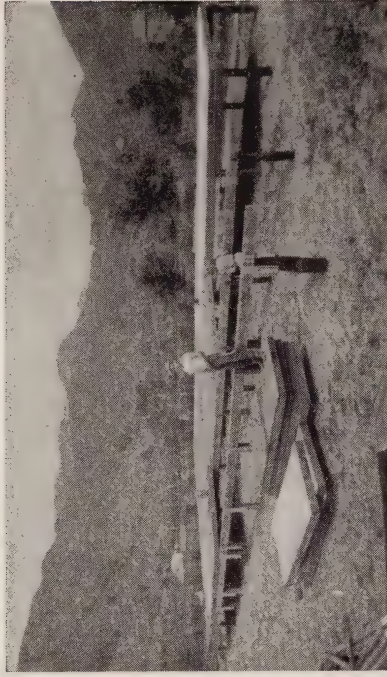
Following Orie O. Miller's visit to Puerto Rico in January, 1945, a number of personnel changes took place. Dr. Amstutz was made acting unit director and director of the medical program. Drs. Troyer and Preheim exchanged places of work, Dr. Troyer and his family moving to La Plata where he assisted in the hospital, and Dr. Preheim and his family moving to Buena Vista where he took over the clinics of the Health Department dispensaries. Roman Gingerich accepted the directorship of the CPS camp at Mulberry, Florida, becoming the first unit member to return to the States. Wyman Sundheimer took over the recreational work begun by Gingerich in the Rincón community center and school and the Cidra school. Earl Maust was transferred from the medical program to replace Sundheimer in the kitchen. Hugh Hostetler was transferred from the La Plata laboratory to the Buena Vista and Rincón clinics to assist the doctor. Robert Ehret, who had been selected to assist Dr. Troyer in the clinics, was transferred back to La Plata. With the increase in laundry work brought about by the addition of a hospital, several Puerto Rican workers were employed to assist Royal Snyder.

Harry Martens, Kansas, arrived in March, 1945, to become unit director replacing H. Clair Amstutz. Martens had been associated with the MCC since 1943, having served in various administrative positions. Mrs. Harry Martens and son Duane Lee, and Mrs. H. Clair Amstutz and children Barbara, Vivian, John, and Carolyn, joined their husbands and fathers respectively at La Plata in May, 1945. Others arriving during the month of May were Leroy Mann, Pennsylvania, office clerk, and Mrs. Carl Lehman, Ohio, teacher in La Plata school. Mr. and Mrs. Joe Brunk, Indiana, arrived in July, the former to direct the construction of the chapel. Pearl Kauffman, Illinois, dietitian, and Annabelle Troyer (Greaser), Indiana, nurse, came in August. Wilbur Nachtigall, the first Mennonite Central Committee worker to Puerto Rico, was the second to return to the States. He returned in July, 1945, after serving eighteen months as unit director and six months as medical social worker.

The beginning of CPS demobilization in the late fall of 1945 brought about a big turnover of personnel during the fall and spring months of 1945 and 1946. The following workers completed their term of service during the fall and winter months of 1945: Lucille Roth, Salome Fast (Holsinger), Carol Diller, Grace Kauffman (Nachtigall), Mr. and Mrs. Orie Gingerich, Albert Bohrer, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Lehman, N. Paul Stucky, Earl Maust, and Ophia Sevits (Snyder). These workers were



Breaking ground for the Mennonite General Hospital.



Laying the foundation for the Big Dorm.



in club program these boys were taught to accompany a girls' glee club with their handmade instruments.



Butchering the first hog grown by the unit. This pig raised on unit garbage later fed the unit.



replaced in the fall of 1945, by the following new appointees: John Driver, Kansas, cook and medical social worker, who returned to the states in 1948; Edna Peters, Kansas, school health nurse, who returned in 1947; Delos Tanner, Indiana, community education leader and hospital attendant, and James Rinner, Iowa, cook, returning in 1946; Paul Leatherman, Pennsylvania, laboratory assistant, central office secretary, and business manager, returning in 1948; Marjorie Shantz, Ontario, nurse, and Linda Reimer, Manitoba, superintendent of hospital, who transferred to the mission program in December, 1946.

Though the La Plata Mennonite program did not undergo many functional changes during the two postwar years of 1946-47, it did have to adjust to the radical personnel changes brought about by CPS demobilization. The medical and community building programs were forced to draw in their borders of service because of insufficient personnel to continue an extensive program. The medical clinics in the Health Department dispensaries at Rincón, Buena Vista, and Toita were discontinued with Dr. Delbert V. Preheim's leaving for the States following his release from CPS in the spring of 1946. Much of the school health and physical fitness program had to be discontinued during the two-year period because of insufficient personnel. Though these two phases of service were forced to limit their borders, more emphasis was placed on other phases of the program, namely, sanitation, agriculture, and a community religious program. The total program was focused more directly on the La Plata community rather than on the outlying PRRA regions, which had previously been served by the medical and community building programs.

During the early months of 1946, the La Plata Mennonite Project witnessed another large personnel turnover. By the middle of the year only a few of the first group of workers remained in Puerto Rico. Those terminating their service with the Mennonite Central Committee during the spring and summer months of 1946 were: Erwin Schrag, Justus G. Holsinger, James Hean, Carl Epp, Dr. and Mrs. Delbert V. Preheim, Ervin Warkentin, Elmer Gingerich, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Weaver, Marvin Dyck, Robert Ehret, Hugh Hostetler, Roland Kaufman, Harry Weirich, Mr. and Mrs. Victor Buller, Clarence Joe Unruh, Royal Snyder, Wyman Sundheimer and Mr. and Mrs. Joe Brunk. Mr. and Mrs. Harry Martens left in the fall of 1946.

The following replacements arrived in Puerto Rico during the year of 1946, to fill the vacancies left by the outgoing workers: Oswald Goering, Kansas, recreation leader; Glenn Jantz, Kansas, farmer; Melvin Lauver, Pennsylvania, business manager and director; Mrs. Melvin Lauver, Pennsylvania, supervisor of milk station and sewing project; Lawrence Greaser, Kansas, mechanic; John Martin, Ohio, laundry worker;



Joyce Hower, Indiana, operating room assistant; Weldon Martin, Virginia, hospital attendant; Arthur Thiessen, India, laboratory assistant; Nelson Hostetter, Pennsylvania, sanitation worker; Arthur Torkelson, Kansas, farmer; Warren Metzler, Pennsylvania, farmer; Mrs. Warren Metzler, Pennsylvania, nurse; Mervin Nafziger, Idaho, hospital attendant; Ira Good, Ohio, cook; Mrs. Ellwyn Hartzler, Indiana, superintendent of hospital; Esther Miller (Hostetter), Ohio, kitchen supervisor; Mrs. Paul Leatherman, Illinois, hospital secretary; Paul Tieszen, South Dakota, farmer; Ellwyn Hartzler, Illinois, recreation leader; Clayton Gingerich, Iowa, sanitation worker; Eugene van der Smissen, Kansas, laboratory assistant; Kenneth Schmidt, Missouri, cook; Eldo Neufeld, Kansas, farmer; Moses Beachy, Iowa, farmer; George Potter, New York, sanitation worker; Leo Swartzendruber, Iowa, recreation leader and secretary; Mrs. Leo Swartzendruber, Iowa, cook; William Gibboney, Ohio, hospital attendant. This group of workers returned to the states the following year, with the exception of Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Lauver, Mrs. Paul Leatherman, Clayton Gingerich, Eugene van der Smissen, Eldo Neufeld, Moses Beachy, George Potter, Mr. and Mrs. Leo Swartzendruber, and William Gibboney, all of whom returned in 1948.

During the years of 1947, 1948, and 1949, the following service workers arrived, committed to an eighteen-month term of service: Mrs. John Driver, Minnesota, nurse; Henry Harder, Alberta, construction foreman; Linnie Peachey, Pennsylvania, practical nurse; Luke Birky, Oregon, mechanic and business manager; Mrs. Luke Birky, Oregon, nurse; Perry Miller, Kansas, cook and hospital secretary; Louisie Deckert, Kansas, superintendent of hospital; Horace Martin, Pennsylvania, operating room assistant; Ralph Goering, Kansas, laboratory assistant; Willard Good, Illinois, maintenance worker and operating room assistant; Mrs. Willard Good, Illinois, sewing project supervisor; Dr. Charles Hertzler, Virginia, medical director; Mrs. Charles Hertzler, Virginia; Eleanor Weaver, Indiana, office secretary; Esther Lehrman, Idaho, community education supervisor; Orpha Leatherman, Pennsylvania, nurse; Isaac Frederick, Pennsylvania, laundry worker and hospital secretary; Howard Landis, Illinois, farmer and sanitation worker; Emma Showalter, Virginia, laboratory technician; Lydia Esther Santiago, Coamo, P.R., medical social worker; John Brandeberry, Indiana, recreation leader, poultry worker, superintendent of buildings and grounds; Mrs. John Brandeberry, Indiana, kitchen supervisor; Orvin Kaufman, Indiana, mechanic; Arlene Shoup, Ohio, drug room assistant and hospital secretary; Elta Yoder (Ehret), Indiana, clinic nurse; Oliver Stucky, Colorado, construction worker; Mrs. Oliver Stucky, Colorado, nurse; Vesta Yoder, Kansas, nurse; Ezra Peachey, Pennsylvania, farmer; Addona Nissley, Indiana, laundry and sanitation worker; Dr. Frederick Swartzendruber,

Illinois, medical director (two-year term); Mrs. Frederick Swartzendruber, Ontario, hospital attendant and child evangelist (two-year term); Gerald Miller, Ohio, farmer and construction worker; Mrs. Gerald Miller, Ohio, community education supervisor; Ruth Nussbaum, Idaho, office secretary; Jeanette Lewis, Pennsylvania, nurse; Maynard Good, Indiana, laundry worker and crafts supervisor; Mabel Miller, Ohio, cook and sewing project supervisor.

From this group of workers the following served a second eighteen-month term: Mr. and Mrs. Luke Birky, Louisie Deckert, Mr. and Mrs. Willard Good, Orpha Leatherman, Emma Showalter, Lydia Esther Santiago, Mr. and Mrs. John Brandeberry, and Arlene Shoup.

The provision for long-term personnel in the service program first became effective in September, 1948, when Mr. and Mrs. Justus Holsinger returned to Puerto Rico on a continuing basis. Those assigned on a continuing basis commit themselves to Puerto Rican service for a minimum of three and one-half years, following which they are entitled to a six-month furlough, or for a five-year term with one-year furlough. Their allowance is the same as the missionary allowance. The second couple assigned to Puerto Rico on a continuing basis was Mr. and Mrs. Royal Snyder, who returned in August, 1949, the former to become director of the agriculture program. Mr. and Mrs. Luke Birky were appointed as continuing workers, October, 1950. With the appointment of these three couples the offices of director, agriculture director, and business manager were filled by persons assigned to Puerto Rico on a long-term basis.

Soon after the administration of the service program at La Plata was transferred from the Mennonite Central Committee to the Mennonite Relief Committee, January, 1950, the latter committee took action to appoint workers for a period of two years rather than eighteen months. It was generally agreed that a two-year period of time was the minimum required for a worker to become sufficiently acquainted with the language and culture of the Puerto Rican people to render a worth-while contribution in service.

Of the following group of workers appointed by the Mennonite Relief Committee, all except the first two were appointed for a two-year term of service: Henry Zehr, Indiana, farmer and construction foreman; Mrs. Henry Zehr, Indiana, sewing project supervisor; Esther Unzicker, Illinois, practical nurse; Wayne Swartzendruber, Michigan, sanitation worker and crafts supervisor; Mrs. Wayne Swartzendruber, Nebraska, community education supervisor; Dr. Walter Massanari, Illinois, assistant medical director; Mrs. Walter Massanari, Illinois, nurse; Ethel Zook, Pennsylvania, superintendent of hospital; Orris Yoder, Indiana, office secretary; Ruth Byler, Ohio, clinic nurse; Clair Hoover, Indiana, drug

room assistant; Mrs. Clair Hoover, Indiana, cook; Dorothy Lehman, Virginia, nurse; Doris Lahman, Virginia, nurse; Robert Yoder, Indiana, sanitation worker; Dean Hochstetler, Indiana, mechanic; Maurice Hooley, Indiana, farmer; Mrs. Maurice Hooley, Indiana, sewing project supervisor; John Miller, Oregon, construction worker; Alvin Kaufman, Ohio, construction worker; Delmar Byler, Kansas, sanitation worker; Mrs. Delmar Byler, sewing project supervisor; Tillman Hershberger, Kansas, farmer. As of June 30, 1951, two new workers were appointed by the Mennonite Relief Committee to service in the La Plata Mennonite Project. They were James Snyder, Indiana, recreation leader, to arrive in August, and Ruth Yoder, Pennsylvania, dietitian, to arrive in September.

During the eight-year period of time from July, 1943, to July, 1951, a total of 146 Christian workers served in the program of the La Plata Mennonite Project. These workers came from seventeen different states, two foreign countries, and one territory. Indiana furnished the most workers, with twenty-nine. The states next in order were Kansas, twenty-five; Pennsylvania, nineteen; Ohio, sixteen; Illinois, thirteen; Virginia and Iowa, eight each; Oregon, Michigan, Idaho, Minnesota, and South Dakota three each; Colorado and Nebraska two each; and California, Missouri, New York one each. Canada furnished four workers, India one, and Puerto Rico one.

Due credit should be given the Puerto Rican employees, employed in the various phases of service of the project. During the first two years the program was carried on almost altogether by continental personnel, but gradually Puerto Rican personnel were trained to take over responsibilities in the hospital, kitchen, laundry, and farm. Approximately thirty Puerto Rican workers were regularly employed by the project in 1951. Of this number twelve were associated directly with the hospital and clinic as aides or assistants to the nurses and doctors. The following workers worked five or more years and were still employed in July, 1951: Juan Bautista, Fermina Gutiérrez, Everisto Rivera, Longino Arroyo Matos, and Ramona Vázquez de Santos.

High standards of conduct have been required of all Puerto Rican workers. Only those persons are employed and retained who possess a proper attitude toward service and toward the Puerto Rican people whom they serve. In 1951, an individual contract was signed by each worker, in which he agreed to certain conditions of employment and to uphold standards of moral conduct. Each worker is evaluated every six months by his work supervisor. This evaluation record is kept on file to determine pay increase and also to serve as a future reference on the worker.



## ADMINISTRATIVE PLANNING

A program of community rehabilitation which expanded as rapidly as the La Plata program did in 1944 and 1945 necessitated careful administrative organization and planning. The securing of adequate personnel and increasing budget spendings were among the major problems that had to be worked out in close co-operation with the MCC office headquarters at Akron. To work out the administrative planning most effectively, C. L. Graber, MCC relief administrator, came to Puerto Rico in April, 1944. He found public relations toward the CPS programs on the island excellent, and he also noted A. M. de Andino's enthusiasm for the La Plata work. Andino was chief of PRRA Agriculture Liquidation. Graber found the attitude of the La Plata rural people encouraging as reflected in a statement from one of the La Plata farmers, "I sometimes wish the war would not end because when the war is over these men will go back to the States and leave us alone." He was asked numerous times how long the Mennonites planned to stay on the island.

One of the major problems which Graber faced was planning for adequate personnel to carry out the program to which the Mennonites had committed themselves. At the time of his visit the total number of workers was sixteen, fourteen CPS men and two non-CPS women. He anticipated that when the hospital was completed the project would need a total of thirty-six workers, twenty-four CPS assignees and twelve non-CPS workers. His plan also called for two additional doctors to staff the hospital and clinics. He recommended that a CPS man be detached from the unit to teach in the Barranquitas Baptist Academy in answer to a request from Dr. Aaron Webber, superintendent of Baptist work in Puerto Rico.

In view of the requests for a permanent Mennonite program in Puerto Rico, Graber felt strongly the need of a chapel building since the only place for unit religious services was in the small living room of the doctor's house. He envisioned the chapel as not only a place for unit services but also becoming a center for the development of religious services among the local people in the form of a Sunday school or story hour for the children, or a worship service for the older people. He estimated that such a building would cost from \$1,800 to \$2,400. He recommended that the unit therefore proceed to draw plans for the erection of such a structure. The big program of construction necessary to take care of the hospital and unit personnel needs made it impossible to carry out this recommendation until about a year later.

It was estimated that a budget calling for a monthly expenditure of \$2,300 would be necessary to finance the expanded program and maintain the thirty-six workers on the field. Included in the budget was an

estimated expenditure of \$12,383.94 for medical equipment. This was scaled down to \$10,000 by acquiring some equipment on a loan basis. The question of increasing the CPS allowance was also brought to Graber's attention. When the first CPS men were assigned to Puerto Rico in June, 1943, it was agreed that they would receive a ten-dollar per month allowance, in addition to food, lodging, and medical care. Shortly after the first workers arrived, the allowance was reduced to five dollars to keep it on parity with the Friends and Brethren allowance bases. It seemed to be the general conclusion that the five-dollar allowance was insufficient to permit workers to use their furlough away from the unit in view of the high costs of food and lodging. The question of allowance increase was brought before the Brumbaugh directors' meeting and it was moved that the allowances be increased but that they be kept uniform among the three service projects. In line with this recommendation the allowance of all CPS men in Puerto Rico was increased to ten dollars per month, June, 1944. At a later date the MCC approved a clothing replacement allowance. A set figure of six dollars per month was set in 1947 for clothing replacements to eliminate the many difficulties in equalizing a clothing replacement allowance.

Graber concluded his report with this statement: "The Mennonite Central Committee has undertaken a challenging program in Puerto Rico which will enable us to build many friendships that are most pleasant. Our ability to help these people in many ways is most challenging. Their courtesy and good will are very evident. It does seem that we have undertaken a program that will need to continue for years to come and which can very easily become a permanent program. There will no doubt be problems arising, but the net result of our work in Puerto Rico should be very good. The entire unit is approaching their work as Christians and so far as I was able to observe are living exemplary lives which will be bound to have an influence on the lives of the men and women and children whom they contact."

P. C. Hiebert, chairman of MCC, came to Puerto Rico in August, 1944, to live with the unit several weeks in order to see firsthand the expansion problems and to help plan an efficient program. Orie O. Miller joined Hiebert for several days on his return trip from South America, and the two MCC commissioners studied carefully the growing service program and suggested measures of administrative reorganization. They felt that a more complete system of organization was necessary in order to keep clear the lines of authority as the program grew and as the personnel increased. The basic objectives and convictions as outlined by Miller in October, 1943, were reaffirmed. A unified and effective administrative organization was set up in order that the pattern of administration might be from Akron through the director to the department heads.

The respective department heads as recommended were: Wilbur Nachtigall, director and chairman of administration; Dr. Delbert V. Preheim, director of hospital and health service; Justus G. Holsinger, director of community building; Carl Lehman, director of business and finance. The administrative staff was composed of the department heads who met each week to review the program of work and consider the problems concerning the respective departments. The director became the liaison in all matters of business between the unit and the Akron office, the central office of PRRA and local PRRA representatives, the central office of Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit, and all other agencies of the Insular and Federal governments.

When Harry Martens arrived March, 1945, to assume the responsibilities as director, he was given a free hand to initiate whatever changes in organization he deemed necessary. No major changes were made, however, in the basic organization. He accepted as his administrative staff, medical director Amstutz, community building director Holsinger, and business manager Lehman. He also proposed that the unit elect a fifth member to the staff. After studying the present program, Martens indicated an interest in developing certain services which had not previously been developed because of insufficient personnel. He proposed employing more Puerto Ricans at certain points in the program, thus releasing certain continental workers for new work. In order to develop further the agricultural service, Carl Epp, who had been hospital secretary for some time, was replaced at the desk by a Puerto Rican girl and he was assigned full time to agriculture. Since the program did not yet include the field of community sanitation, Hugh Hostetler was assigned part time to it. He was later joined by Wyman Sundheimer and Victor Buller. A new subunit of three members was opened at Comerío in the Pasarell community center where Roland Kaufman had lived alone for some months. Kaufman had been assigned to direct community recreation in the Pasarell center. Mr. and Mrs. Victor Buller joined Kaufman to compose the three-member subunit of Comerío. Robert Ehret was given permission to develop further embalming service as a definite part of the unit program. Director Martens also recommended further development in the field of personal ministering. Visiting teams of unit members were organized and assigned to certain sections of the community each Sunday afternoon. A committee was appointed, consisting of Dr. George D. Troyer, Carl Lehman, and Ervin Warkentin, to plan the construction of the chapel.

#### **PRRA-MCC AGREEMENT**

When the CPS program was begun in Puerto Rico by the three church agencies no written agreement was negotiated with the Federal



government's sponsoring agency, PRRA. The understanding was merely a gentlemen's agreement with nothing in written form concerning the obligations and responsibilities of either party. The church agencies were occupying and using federal property with no clear statement of the conditions under which they might continue to use the property nor the liability involved in the continued use of it. The loss of the community center building by fire at the Zalduondo project tended to make both government and church agencies conscious of the need for a written agreement. On the other hand, there was no written statement concerning the nature of the program expected of the church agencies, and its relationship to the community. In view of the fact that PRRA was in the process of liquidation and the officials who had negotiated the oral agreements with the church agencies might not continue indefinitely with PRRA, Rufus B. King, director of the Brumbaugh Service Unit, suggested in the Brumbaugh directors' meeting that each church agency negotiate a written agreement with PRRA.

The agreement between the Mennonite Central Committee, acting through its legal agent, Harry Martens, and the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration, became effective July 1, 1945. Since PRRA was interested in the church agencies' furthering the program of rural rehabilitation, it agreed to furnish to the Mennonite Central Committee the housing facilities and equipment necessary to carry on the health and rehabilitation work. The property and equipment were furnished to the MCC on a loan basis to be returned to the government in the same condition when the lease expired. PRRA also agreed to sell or lease land which MCC might need in order to erect buildings necessary for the execution of its future program.

In return the MCC agreed to furnish support and personnel to carry on a program of health and rehabilitation; to pay all labor required for the general maintenance, upkeep, and repair of property; to pay all bills covering electricity consumed by the buildings loaned to the committee; to insure the buildings so loaned to the committee in accordance with the government value of the building; to furnish certain materials, supplies, equipment, etc., which remain property of the committee. It was further agreed that the program was one of co-ordination between the respective agencies serving the PRRA resettlers and surrounding rural area, and that any program development or personnel changes were of concern to both parties to the agreement, and thus to be shared by both. The agreement was renewed each year until the purchase of the project by the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities in 1947.

J. N. Byler, director of MCC relief section, visited Puerto Rico, March, 1946, to assist in the future planning of the La Plata program and in the dedication of the new chapel. In his report to the Executive

Committee of MCC, he briefly summarized the La Plata program with the immediate future plans. He announced the intention of continuing the medical clinics at Buena Vista and Rincón in hopes that a doctor might be found to replace Dr. Preheim upon his release. He proposed the discontinuing of the Comerío subunit when the Bullers returned to the States. An expansion of the agriculture program was planned for the purpose of producing more food for the unit and to demonstrate food production to the community. He advised the appointment of an educational director to take over the duties of the community building director, Justus G. Holsinger, upon his release. A proposed program was also suggested in which college students might earn a year's credit for two years of work and study in the La Plata project. This never materialized, however, because of opposition from some of the Mennonite college administrations. No commitment was made on the question of using the chapel as a community house of worship. MCC was asked to decide if one of the Mennonite groups should be invited to begin an evangelistic program in the La Plata community.

Orie O. Miller visited La Plata in July, 1946, and recommended that the Executive Committee of MCC accept the proposal of the unit that the chapel be used as an evangelical witness at La Plata. He also recommended the continued use of CPS men in the La Plata program and the extension of the term of workers from one year to eighteen months. With Martens' plans to return to the States, Miller recommended the appointment of Melvin Lauver to succeed him as unit director. All of these recommendations were subsequently approved at the next Executive Committee meeting of MCC. Harry Martens left for the States in September, and Melvin Lauver, the former business manager, became the new director. Leroy Mann succeeded Lauver as business manager.

## **FUTURE OUTLOOK OF BRUMBAUGH PROGRAM**

The problem of securing adequate personnel to continue the programs following CPS demobilization weighed heavily upon the service agencies since they needed to find new means of recruiting voluntary personnel. The shortage of personnel necessitated certain changes in the program such as the discontinuing of the projects in the Virgin Islands and St. Just. On the other hand, new church agencies became interested in the rehabilitation programs of the three peace churches and began similar work on the island. Already in July, 1945, the El Guacio project was begun under the direction of Stanley and Jean Harbison, former workers of the Castañer project. The El Guacio project was sponsored by the Presbyterian Church and was planned somewhat along the same lines as the other projects. The plan as outlined in

July, 1945, called for a total of nine workers, six of whom might be CPS men. This project is still in operation with a community program of medical, agricultural, and religious service.

The Friends Service Committee in an official letter from its executive secretary, October, 1945, announced its intention of withdrawing from Puerto Rico, January 31, 1946. The remaining men in the Friends project who were not released by that date were given the choice of joining the Mennonite, Brethren, or Presbyterian units, or returning to the government CPS camps in the States. With the Friends' announcement of their decision to withdraw, a group of official representatives of the Congregational Christian Church made a study of the Zalduondo project with the intention of continuing the community service program. The Congregational Christian Board, December, 1945, announced officially its intention of sponsoring the Zalduondo unit for a period of three years, beginning with the date of the withdrawal of the Friends Service Committee. Ivan Chatham, a member of the Friends unit at St. Just, was the chief promoter for the continuation of the Zalduondo program. The program is still in operation with Chatham directing the work.

When the war closed in 1945, the nature of the postwar Mennonite program at La Plata was of primary concern to all those interested in seeing it continued along the same lines. That the service program would be continued was an accepted fact. It was the common opinion that as Selective Service moved out of the picture more emphasis could be placed on an organized religious program for the community. The Mennonite Central Committee, however, was not a church agency organized for the purpose of conducting a permanent mission program as such. It was generally believed that one of the constituent groups of the Mennonite church should take over the program if and when the Mennonite Central Committee decided to turn it over to a mission group. No official action was taken in this direction, however, until several years later. There seemed to be an agreement between the (old) Mennonite and General Conference Mennonite constituencies that Paraguay would be left an open field for General Conference Mennonite mission work and Puerto Rico would be considered an open field for (old) Mennonite mission work. This agreement, however, was not an indication that MCC had immediate plans to turn over its program in Puerto Rico to a mission group of the (old) Mennonite Church. In fact, there was considerable interest on the part of MCC officials in continuing the MCC program indefinitely. The question of chief concern to the workers and to the Puerto Rican people was not so much who would be the sponsoring agency, but that the Puerto Rican people would continue to receive the services of the Mennonite Church in the spirit of Christian



love, and that the program begun during the war might become a permanent witness in Puerto Rico.

It was generally understood that following CPS demobilization certain changes in the program would probably take place. The continuation of the Buena Vista and Comerío subunits was rather uncertain. The school health program of the community building division also stood to be curbed in event of a shortage of personnel. These predictions become facts in the fall of 1945 and the early part of 1946 when the first big personnel turnover took place.

Another question of concern to the Brumbaugh units was the future of the central office located at the Evangelical Seminary in Río Piedras. With the release of Rufus B. King from CPS and his return to the States in May, 1946, it seemed that a successor to King would need to be appointed or the central office be discontinued. A possible solution was that the office of director be discontinued and that a hostel be set up in the vicinity of St. Just, several miles outside of Río Piedras. The hostel would be occupied by a secretary and his wife who could look after the San Juan interests of both the La Plata and Castañer projects. Both projects were well established with the government officials by the end of 1945 so that there seemed to be little need for an over-all director with a San Juan office. The central office was discontinued in Río Piedras early in 1946 and a hostel was established at St. Just with Mr. and Mrs. Paul Leatherman appointed as secretary and hostess.

Several government agencies of Puerto Rico were interested in having CPS men remain following their release to accept positions in teaching, public health, or recreation. One of the first men to be released and accept a position was Woodrow Pickering, who accepted a position to teach music in the Central High School of Santurce. In the signing of his contract he made a reservation to the allegiance clause to the effect that he would not agree to defend his country with arms. The contract was rejected by the acting Commissioner of Education and an appeal was made to the Attorney General for an interpretation. The decision given by the Attorney General was that by law all persons accepting government positions would need to sign the pledge of allegiance without reservation. The decision was final and Pickering took a position with a private institution. During the next session of the legislature, however, the law was changed and it was no longer mandatory that a public school teacher agree to defend his country with arms.

The Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit, the co-operative central organization of Brethren, Friends, and Mennonites in Puerto Rico, reached its peak in the fall of 1945. Just before the beginning of CPS demobilization in December, 1945, there were 120 continental workers affiliated with the Brumbaugh Service Unit, seventy-five of whom were CPS





men. The total operating budget of all three agencies in Puerto Rico was in excess of \$100,000. The systematic release of conscientious objectors began in the fall of 1945, and by the end of 1946 only six CPS men remained in Puerto Rico. With the expiration of the Selective Service law in March, 1947, all CPS men were automatically released, and thus ended the CPS program in Puerto Rico.

#### **PURCHASE OF PROJECT BY MISSION BOARD**

Early in 1947 Guillermo Esteves, assistant administrator of PRRA, announced to the Brethren, Mennonites, and Congregational Christians his willingness to sell the land and property at Castañer, La Plata, and Zalduondo, to the respective church agencies for the purpose of continuing the community programs. Ray Schlichting, MCC controller, was sent to Puerto Rico in October, 1947, to assist Director Lauver in studying and making recommendations concerning the purchasing of the La Plata property. After talking with PRRA officials, Schlichting stated that the property which could be used by the organization in continuing the program might be purchased at about \$32,500. He recommended that the Mennonite Central Committee consult its respective constituent groups to determine whether there was sufficient interest in purchasing the property for a long range MCC program in Puerto Rico. He also felt that a dual arrangement of the MCC and the Mission Board at La Plata would become more cumbersome administratively with time and that problems might also arise in connection with the variety of practices of the various Mennonite groups, in which case it might be desirable for one of the church groups to purchase La Plata and for MCC to concentrate its interests on some other field of service.

At the October, 1947, meeting of the MCC Executive Committee it was decided that the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities be invited to take over future negotiations for the procurement of the properties at La Plata. E. C. Bender, treasurer of the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, was sent to Puerto Rico the latter part of 1947 to negotiate the purchase of the property. The Board received legal possession of the La Plata project in February, 1948. The purchase included nearly twenty-three cuerdas (one cuerda is almost an acre) of level land near the project, and about fifty-three cuerdas of mountain land about a mile from the project. The buildings included in the purchase were the hospital, laundry, medical and food storeroom, garage, seven dwelling houses, store building, community center, and animal

A Good Friday processional on the plaza of a Puerto Rican town. All loyal members of the Catholic Church participate in the Good Friday celebrations.

Courtesy of Government of Puerto Rico. Photo by Rotkin



barns. Also included in the purchases was the movable PRRA property such as chairs, tables, cabinets, etc. The total cost of the purchase was \$35,000, payable in annual installments over a five-year period after which the Board would receive clear title to the property. Included in the transfer agreement was the provision that the property must continue to be used for the welfare of the community.

## **PLANNING TOWARD A PERMANENT SERVICE PROGRAM**

The two years following the war were characterized by a degree of uncertainty because there were so many unanswered questions concerning the future of the program. It had become generally assumed that a Mennonite program would be continued, but the exact nature of the program, and by what Mennonite agency it would be administered, were unanswered questions until 1949. The purchasing in 1948 of the central service farm at La Plata along with the other project property by the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, was a strong indication that the La Plata program would eventually be under the general administration of that Board.

One month before the La Plata property transfer to the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, the Mennonite Central Committee and the Board drew up a memorandum in which it was agreed that the Mennonite Central Committee would continue the service program at La Plata, and that the Board would give an eighteen-month notice previous to a program transfer date. January 1, 1950, was later set as the date of transfer. It was also agreed that four or five permanent workers should be appointed to the service program. These workers were designated as director, medical director, business manager, farm manager, and community service director. The appointment of these workers would be made by MCC with the approval of the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. Since the project property was in need of repair the two agencies agreed to repair it on a 50-50 basis to the total cost of \$5,000. The administering of the property improvement was delegated to the unit director who worked with the joint staff, consisting of the La Plata unit staff and the local executive committee of the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. This program of property improvement was completed in September, 1949.

The La Plata project administration changed in September, 1948, when Justus G. Holsinger replaced Melvin Lauver as unit director. Lauver had served as director since September, 1946. No major changes in program planning took place at the time of the administrative change. In the last few months of 1948, a program plan was drawn up in which the general objective of service was stated, with each phase of the

program stating its specific objective. The general objective of service was stated as follows: "To extend the kingdom of God in Puerto Rico by ministering to the human needs of the Puerto Rican people. By human needs we mean the spiritual, physical, social, mental, and economic needs." The medical program defined as its objective, to make Christ known to the people through a Christian medical service rendered "In the Name of Christ." The objective of the community service program was defined as assisting the people of the community to develop strong Christian personalities, and to aid in establishing Christian principles in human relations. The objective of the agricultural program was threefold: to help make the total program more self-sufficient by the production of more food for unit and hospital consumption; to discover and promote means by which local farmers might better utilize the God-given agricultural resources so as to raise the standard of living of their homes; to train Puerto Rican workers to assume responsibility in farm operation. The church program objective was defined as winning the lost to an experience of the new birth through the preaching of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; to establish the church as a body of evangelical believers; to establish the faith true to New Testament principles such as the Mennonite Church holds.

In December, 1948, a reorganization of administration was approved by unit action and submitted to the MCC Akron office where it was approved with a few recommended changes. The total La Plata program was organized under five divisions according to the type of service rendered. The administrative division, which contributed toward the program as a whole, included the office, kitchen, laundry, construction, and mechanical maintenance. The community service division included community recreation and education, community nutrition, sewing project, and crafts. The agriculture division centered around the central service farm, and the community agricultural program. The church program, administered by the Mission Board, included the religious activities centering around the La Plata and Rabanal churches. Each division elected its chairman, who represented it on the staff-council. The staff-council also included the administrative officials appointed from Akron; namely, director, business manager, medical director, and agriculture director. The primary function of the staff-council was to advise the director on administrative questions. It met bimonthly, alternating with the general unit meeting. The primary functions of the general unit meetings were: to consider and initiate policies in line with general MCC policies; to discuss problems pertaining to the unit; to take action on matters referred to it by divisions, or by the staff-council; to acquaint all members with work of the respective divisions; to promote unity of service among the respective workers.

The Mennonite Relief Committee's decision to take over the administration of the service program at La Plata was announced by Orie O. Miller and E. C. Bender when they came to Puerto Rico in January, 1949. The exact date of the transfer had previously been set as January 1, 1950, at which time the Mennonite Relief Committee would amortize all MCC interests in Puerto Rico. The fact that the MRC was taking over the service program gave definite assurance that the service work at La Plata would be continued in the same manner as administered by MCC. The cash budget for MRC was set at \$25,000, with the assumption that the \$20,000 government subsidy for indigent patients would continue, and that the income from clinic and hospital patients would continue to be around twenty or twenty-five thousand dollars a year.

On January 1, 1950, the administration of the La Plata service program was transferred from the Mennonite Central Committee to the Mennonite Relief Committee. Justus G. Holsinger, unit director, was appointed to represent the Mennonite Central Committee in negotiating the transfer of all MCC interests in Puerto Rico to the Mennonite Relief Committee or to the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. Levi C. Hartzler, executive secretary of the Mennonite Relief Committee, came to Puerto Rico in January, 1950, to represent the MRC in the transfer. An appraisal board consisting of Luke Birky, John Brandeberry, and Stanley Miller, was appointed by the unit director to appraise all MCC assets, which included the La Plata church building and parsonage, all medical equipment and supplies, motor vehicles, and the larger part of household equipment. The total MCC holdings were valued at \$33,-010.62. The church and parsonage, valued at \$5,824.08, were sold directly to the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, since this property was being used for the evangelistic program of the Board. The remaining MCC assets were reduced to \$18,933.88, since MRC holds a 25 per cent equity interest in all MCC assets. This figure was further reduced by a credit to MRC on equipment turned over to MCC by the Poland unit amounting to \$1,875.50, leaving the total transfer cost of \$17,058.38 to be amortized by MRC over a period of ten years according to previous agreement. The MRC also agreed to pay the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities \$3,500 each year for a period of ten years in amortization of the La Plata real estate purchased from PRRA by the Mission Board in 1947, and used by the MRC in its service program.

The transfer of the La Plata service program from MCC to MRC took place with little noticeable change. Few, if any, of the local Puerto Ricans were conscious of any change in administration since all MCC appointed personnel continued under MRC administration. No major changes in the program were initiated by MRC, since the basic philosophies of service of the two agencies were the same.

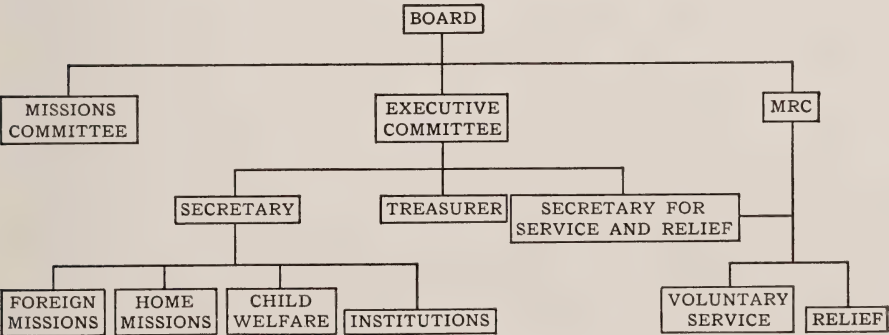


Perhaps many persons not familiar with the various agencies of the Mennonite Church do not know the difference in structure and function of the Mennonite Relief Committee and the Mennonite Central Committee. The Mennonite Central Committee is the central organ of the various Mennonite Church branches, authorized to administer the relief program of the total Mennonite Church of North America. The MCC, being primarily a relief agency, carries on its most extensive program in war-stricken regions of the world. The MCC is not authorized by the respective church groups to organize churches or missions in the areas where relief is administered. Through the administration of services and relief "In the Name of Christ," it does endeavor to leave a Christian witness and create a fellowship of good will, thus sowing the seeds for a program of evangelization to be sponsored by the mission agencies of the respective church groups.

The Mennonite Relief Committee is a committee of the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, authorized to administer the service and relief program of the (old) Mennonite Church, the largest of the various Mennonite groups. It is also the agency through which the MCC receives its financial support from most of the conferences of the (old) Mennonite Church.

The Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers was first organized in 1917, to do relief work in France and later in the Near East. At the 1925 annual meeting of the Mennonite Relief Commission a resolution was passed to replace that organization with a committee under the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. This plan was approved in 1926, and a constitutional amendment authorized the setting up of the MRC. Since that time the MRC has expanded because of the growing emphasis on service and relief.

The transfer of the La Plata Mennonite Project to the MRC makes it possible to co-ordinate more closely the service program, and the evangelistic program which is administered directly by the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. The following outline shows the relationship of the MRC to the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities:



One of the first problems arising from the transfer of administration of the La Plata program was the question of the legal status of the agency operating the program. The Mennonite Central Committee was incorporated under the laws of Pennsylvania and operated in Puerto Rico with full legal rights as a nondomestic corporation. Likewise the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities incorporated in the state of Ohio was granted legal rights as a nondomestic corporation in Puerto Rico. The MRC, however, was never incorporated since it was a committee of the Mission Board. It could therefore have no legal authority to negotiate contracts nor own property in Puerto Rico.

Each year the MCC negotiated a \$20,000 contract with the Insular Department of Health to cover the hospitalization costs of indigent patients taken care of in the Mennonite General Hospital. Since the primary function of the Mission Board had been evangelization, it was generally agreed that it would be unadvisable for that agency to negotiate a contract with the Insular Government for the hospital subsidy. It was also agreed that for efficiency of administration either the MRC or the La Plata Mennonite Project should have the legal right to hold title to motor vehicles, insurance policies, and other property used in the service program.

After a careful study of the problem by the La Plata administration and MRC, it was decided that the La Plata Mennonite Project should become incorporated as a nonprofit charity corporation under the laws of Puerto Rico. The La Plata Mennonite Project, Inc., received its charter from the office of the Executive Secretary of Puerto Rico in June, 1950.

The purpose of the La Plata Mennonite Project, Inc., as stated in the Articles of Incorporation was, "to administer service to the social, economic, medical, educational, and religious needs of the people of Puerto Rico, and particularly those in the La Plata Valley within the municipalities of Aibonito, Cidra, Cayey, Barranquitas, and Comerío." The members of the Board of Trustees, appointed by MRC were: Justus G. Holsinger, president; Luke Birky, secretary-treasurer; H. Ernest Bennett, Elmer Springer, and Levi C. Hartzler. The corporation owns property valued at \$20,000 and has access to property valued at \$75,000, which is owned by the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities.

Another problem faced by MRC and the Mission Board was that of closer co-ordination of the service and mission programs. When Orie O. Miller visited Puerto Rico in January, 1949, he pointed out that the service and evangelistic programs of the Mennonite Church in Puerto Rico should supplement each other, though the evangelistic program was administered by the Mission Board directly, and the MRC was to replace the MCC in administering the service program. When Levi C.

Hartzler was in Puerto Rico in January, 1950, he carefully pointed out the relationship of the service and mission programs. He spoke of the mission work as a direct preaching and evangelistic teaching witness, whereas the service program is an indirect witness, or a demonstrative witness. He also pointed out that the goal of the two witnesses is the same—to bring souls into the kingdom of God.

The organizational set-up of the two programs frequently made it difficult to secure proper co-ordination. The Mission Board in the States appointed the members to the local executive committee responsible for the administration of the mission program in Puerto Rico. The individual missionaries for the most part were allowed broad freedom in working out their respective programs in line with executive committee policy. The service program on the other hand operated more as an institution under the administration of the unit director and his advisory administrative staff, appointed by and responsible to the executive secretary of the Mennonite Relief Committee.

In January, 1951, E. C. Bender and Levi C. Hartzler were sent to Puerto Rico to bring about closer co-ordination of the two programs. The former was appointed by the Mission Board and the latter by MRC. After studying carefully the mission-service administrative relationship, Bender and Hartzler proposed the creation of a Puerto Rico executive committee to replace the present local mission executive committee. The Puerto Rico executive committee would consist of members from the service program as well as from the mission program. It would become the central agency of the total Mennonite program in Puerto Rico, responsible to the Mission Board for the administration of the evangelistic work, and to the Mennonite Relief Committee for the administration of the service program. Bender and Hartzler also indicated that the very nature of the service program required that it continue to operate as an institution under the direction of the unit director, and that the channel of administration between the director and the MRC executive secretary be kept open for clearance of administrative details.

The Korean War and the movement toward universal peacetime conscription, has aroused an interest on the part of young men with a 4-E [now 1-O] classification for constructive service in lieu of military service. One of Hartzler's concerns, as director of voluntary service for the (old) Mennonite Church, was to find places where these 4-E men might be used in a constructive service. The Christian witness left by the conscientious objectors during and following World War II made an imprint upon many Puerto Rican government officials. If Selective Service approves the work that is now being done in Puerto Rico, there is a strong possibility that Puerto Rican public officials will welcome a limited number of 4-E men in such work as community sanitation and commu-



nity recreation. A few 4-E men have already been absorbed in the La Plata service program but it seemed best to await Selective Service approval before assigning additional men to Puerto Rico.

## FOUR

### Medical Service

#### LA PLATA MEDICAL PROGRAM, 1944-45

The request for a 25-bed hospital at La Plata was presented to the Mennonite Central Committee, December, 1943. This request grew out of the conviction that one of the greatest needs of the rural people of the valley was a small rural hospital. Rural dispensaries and district hospitals were maintained by the Insular Department of Health, but the Castañer hospital opened in 1943 near Adjuntas was the only rural hospital in Puerto Rico. A small rural hospital at La Plata would offer the same service to the people of the La Plata Valley as the Castañer hospital was now giving to the mountain people in the vicinity of Adjuntas.

The proposed hospital for La Plata was approved at the December meeting of the MCC Executive Committee, along with permission to expend \$2,000 per month for the total Puerto Rico Mennonite program. Approval was also given to send to Puerto Rico an adequate staff of workers to maintain the proposed program.

A. M. de Andino gave the project official PRRA approval and promised support in securing materials and labor toward the necessary construction. In view of the acute shortage of lumber and materials, it is possible that the hospital construction might not have materialized without this assistance and co-operation from PRRA officials, Esteves and Andino. PRRA agreed to furnish used materials secured from old tobacco barns and warehouses. From these materials an annex was constructed to what was formerly a PRRA farm warehouse. This annex became the men's ward, kitchen, and dining room. Most of the materials used in changing the warehouse into a hospital were also secured from discarded PRRA buildings. Labor was contributed by both PRRA and the CPS unit.

During the time of hospital construction the medical clinic was conducted daily in the completed southeast end of the building. Getting the hospital ready for occupancy at a set date required the efforts of many persons. Unit agronomists, recreation leaders, teachers, laundrymen, nurses, and doctors, all took their turns with the hammer, saw, and shovel, when not fully occupied at their regularly assigned duties.

One of the most outstanding events of 1944 was the dedication of the Mennonite General Hospital on August 13. It opened on August 14, with a staff of nine workers. Plans to open the hospital earlier had been delayed because of the acute wartime shortage of materials.

The morning program of dedication included a dedicatory sermon delivered by P. C. Hiebert, chairman of the Mennonite Central Committee. The sermon was translated into Spanish by Aaron Webber of the Evangelical Seminary. Special music was given by the Cayey Baptist Choir, under the direction of James Hean, and by the unit male quartet. Short talks were also given by unit director Wilbur Nachtigall, Brumbaugh director Rufus B. King, and Fernando del Río and José Nieves of the community. Another feature of the morning program was the presentation of the keys by Ervin Warkentin, construction manager, to A. M. de Andino, who in turn gave them to medical director Preheim. After the official opening, guests were escorted through the building. The noon meal was served to invited guests in the newly constructed dining hall and kitchen, while hot chocolate was served to the people of the community.

The afternoon program was in charge of A. M. de Andino, who explained further the purpose of a rural hospital in the community. Short talks were given by numerous resettlers who expressed their appreciation for the medical service to the community. The spirit of co-operation on the part of the local community at the dedication program was encouraging. Many promised their co-operation in making the hospital a success. Many tokens of appreciation had already been given in the form of eggs, chickens, fruits, and small donations. The resettlers also had a meeting in the community center to raise money toward hospital equipment.

The first baby born in the Mennonite General Hospital was Billy Preheim, son of the medical director. He did not wait for the dedication service, but was born on August 5, eight days before the dedication.

Conducting a medical clinic and opening a hospital among rural people of Puerto Rico carried with it many unusual problems and experiences that a medical staff would hardly encounter in the States. Common rules of sanitation were difficult to teach and enforce, even in a clinic building. Teaching patients to spit into a basin rather than following the common practice of spitting on the floor was one of the first problems. When the hospital was finally opened strict discipline was necessary to get some patients to understand that smoking in hospital rooms was absolutely forbidden. To get people to conform to an orderly and systematic clinic system was indeed a problem, and it took months before much progress could be noted. Not being able to converse with the people made it even more difficult to maintain order. For-





Opening hospital doors on day of dedication. L. to R.: Jose Nieves, PRRA co-ordinator; Rufus B. King, Brumbaugh director; A. M. de Andino, PRRA chief; Dr. Delbert V. Preheim, medical director.



Memmott General Hospital on the day of dedication, August 13, 1944.



Members of the La Plata unit, August, 1944.

unately most Puerto Rican people are extremely patient and do not get in a hurry. Had the several hundred waiting clinic patients shown the degree of impatience characteristic of most Americans, some days would probably have ended in riots.

A page from the doctor's case book gives an idea of the frustrating experiences encountered by a doctor while attempting to set up a well-organized, orderly medical service for the rural people.

"Ramón is a white, 19-year-old farm worker, working at whatever he can find to do—a day or so hoeing in the tobacco fields or cutting cane with his machete when someone will hire him. . . . Ramón's parents are separated; in fact there's some doubt as to who they are and how long they lived together in common-law marriage. He has been living as long as he can remember with his uncle who has a large family of his own to take care of. Ramón is thin and anemic. He rarely eats anything except rice, beans, and sometimes codfish. His teeth are very badly decayed, and that is what got him into trouble.

"About two months previous to his first visit he had got a severe infection in one of his left lower molars. At the time he was very sick, but he didn't go to a doctor because the infection began to drain by itself and the pain went away. However, instead of getting well a 'tumor' (term used to express any infection with swelling and pus) formed over his left lower jaw and brought him to the doctor. The abscess was incised and drained, but instead of being merely a simple 'tumor,' a sinus draining from his jawbone was present. Ramón had a chronic bone infection of his lower jaw which would require an operation for thorough cleaning out. Ramón wanted to get well and agreed to go to the hospital if the doctor would arrange it.

"Accordingly application was made to the district hospital for admission. The acting director was sorry but he felt this to be a case for the Crippled Children's Bureau to handle. In order to apply to the Crippled Children's Bureau, the local public health unit had to be contacted. Consequently, the unit was contacted and the necessary forms sent to the bureau. After about a month the necessary permits from both unit and bureau arrived. He was given an appointment and the way was clear for Ramón to be taken care of.

"When the good news finally arrived, Ramón could not be found. He had gone elsewhere to work. His uncle was unable or unwilling to find him. Besides Ramón had said he didn't care for the operation because he felt well. So the day of his appointment came and went, and Ramón still has his infection."

This incident is not an exceptional case. In going through the doctor's case book one might find many similar incidents, which like this one, would show poverty, ignorance, and irresponsibility on the part of



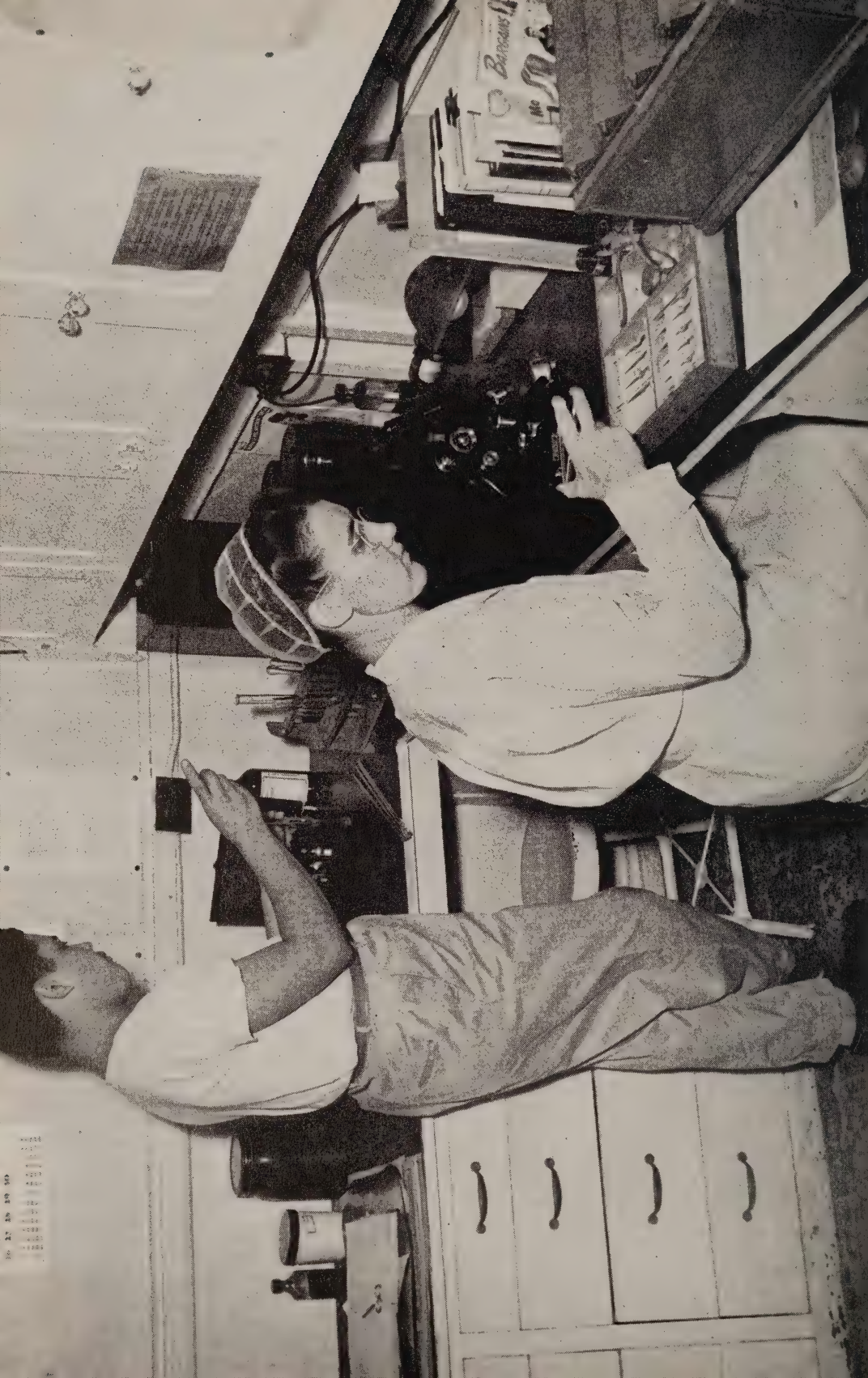
many country folk, as well as the difficulties encountered in securing aid from a bureaucratic governmental structure.

The medical program was in operation for only a short period of time when it became evident that a high percentage of the rural people were infested with intestinal parasites. From the laboratory examinations made during the first few months of clinic operation it was found that 87 per cent of those examined had parasites. Whipworm, hookworm, and roundworm were the most common. From the tests made, 75 per cent had one kind of worm, 20 per cent had two kinds, and 5 per cent had all three. To combat the parasite problem, Friday was set aside for worm treatments. Each positive case was given a treatment once each week for a six-week period, and then a stool check was made to make sure the patient was cured. The diagnosis for a child with parasites was simple since the symptoms were usually the same—fatigue, no appetite, pain in stomach, and anemia. Extreme cases could frequently be detected by the distended abdomens.

One of the common diseases diagnosed in the La Plata clinic during the early months of operation was malaria. Though the Insular Department of Health indicated that La Plata was a relatively low malaria region, the medical records show that one out of every ten admissions to the clinic had malaria. This does not necessarily mean that one out of every ten illnesses in the La Plata Valley was malaria, since the malaria cases came from a larger area than the other cases. In more recent years a case of malaria is rarely found at La Plata. In order to keep down the incidence of malaria a community cleanup campaign was put on in the summer of 1944 by the community building department. The boys who needed money to finance their way to summer boys' camp were put to work collecting, crushing, and disposing of tin cans. Apparently little effort had previously been made to dispose of the tin cans which had collected over a period of years. How much this contributed toward the solution of the malaria problem is difficult to say, but it probably did help to make the community more conscious of sanitation.

A well-equipped laboratory is an essential part of any hospital which operates in a tropical region infested with intestinal parasites and blood diseases. The laboratory was organized as one of the first facilities of the clinic program, and routine laboratory tests were made on all clinic patients. The laboratory was equipped to administer thirty different tests with a more or less satisfactory degree of success. Ranking first in frequency were routine stool examinations, which during the first six months totaled more than 600. Hemoglobin determinations held second place with 474, while urinalyses were third with 439 tests. The addition of a new X-ray machine in March, 1945, assisted greatly in increasing the efficiency of diagnosing respiratory diseases.





During the first two-month period after the hospital was opened, thirty-four patients were admitted. Within the same period of time fourteen operations were performed, ranging from tonsillectomies to major surgery. These were performed by an operating team of a doctor, two nurses, and two CPS attendants. By the close of 1944, almost five months after its opening, the institution was a well-established part of the community, rendering medical service to a large number of poor people. During this five-month period 165 patients were admitted, with a total of 973 patient days and eighty-three operations—twenty-one major and sixty-two minor. When the hospital opened, the outpatient department showed a marked increase in patient visits. During the year of 1944, the outpatient clinic took care of 1,623 new patients and 1,805 return patients. A typical clinic day can best be described in the words of one of the CPS men who worked at the clinic desk.

"The clinic doors are opened at 8:00 a.m. . . . for La Plata and the neighboring rural area. Dr. Troyer will probably perform an eye operation or remove someone's tonsils while the patients are gathering in the waiting room. Then with his cheery, 'O.K., let's go,' everyone jumps to his station and the clinic begins.

"Each patient begins at the secretary's desk where he shows his little blue identification card, or gives the information needed for a new record. He then waits his turn to see the doctor. The doctor sees the patient, but the aches and pains have to be translated into the 'King's English.' From here new patients go to the laboratory, where Marvin or Dick draws blood samples, and then on to the pharmacy where 'chief pharmacist' Stucky fills the prescription. Miss Kauffman is always on hand to help out with special examinations. After the patient finishes this 'obstacle course,' we bid him good luck and send him on his way.

"In the meantime our Puerto Rican secretary and I are on the watch for people who come from outside the local area, and to those we give a little slip of paper with their turn for the afternoon non-limited clinic. Noon approaches and the dinner bell rings. Several patients are left, but Dr. Troyer says, 'Let's see them first—I had a big bowl of cereal this morning!'

"Over the noon hour the crowd outside the admission door gathers, and at one o'clock I take my handful of numbered slips and open the door as the forest of hands stretches up, reaching for a ticket. 'Give me one, Carlito! Give me one!' is all that one can hear. I arrive at ticket No. 70, and still there are hands stretching up for a ticket that will

Emma Showalter, graduate laboratory technician, and Juan Bautista, her assistant, render valuable service to the hospital in their laboratory diagnostic work.







give them an appointment with the doctor. The number is well in the 80's until finally everyone is satisfied.

"I then call out number one, and the afternoon clinic is well begun. In the afternoon Dr. Amstutz, having already seen forty patients at the rural medical dispensary in Toita during the morning, and having seen about ten more at the La Plata prenatal clinic, joins us in the merry-go-round.

"After keeping a continuous watch on the order of the records in order to keep someone from slipping his record up several turns in advance, or watching that no one slips in through the door before his turn, and after listening to patient after patient telling me that he lives the farthest away and therefore should be seen first, and after shouting every five minutes for someone to shut the door to keep out the flies, 5:30 finally comes and with a sigh we relax, while I slump into the chair behind the admission desk and count the names on the register. 'We passed the hundred mark again today!' I say as we drag in for supper to the displeasure of the kitchen force for coming in late."

Many of the people who came were sick people and needed medical care, but of course there were also those who believed that just a personal contact with an American doctor would make them feel better.

The nurse-aide training course was an important part of the medical program. A three-month course was given to girls to train them to assume responsibility in assisting the hospital nurses. Upon the completion of this course three girls were given certificates in January, 1945. They were Alejandrina Hernández, Juanita Santiago, and Herminia Franco. These girls worked with the hospital for a period of time and proved to be efficient in hospital care. Other groups of girls were trained from year to year.

A number of administrative changes took place in the medical program during 1945. Dr. George D. Troyer joined the hospital staff as resident hospital physician, since his license would not permit him to conduct the public health clinic. Dr. Preheim, who held a national license, therefore took over the clinic work at the Rincón and Buena Vista public health dispensaries. Later Dr. H. Clair Amstutz replaced Dr. Delbert V. Preheim, who had served as medical director since 1943. When Dr. Troyer became permanently associated with the hospital he began his eye clinic, and during the first six months fitted 295 pairs of glasses and performed fifty-one eye operations. Lucille Roth replaced Grace Kauffman as superintendent of nurses, but the latter again assumed responsibility as superintendent in August, 1945.

Arlene Shoup, hospital secretary, registers patients who then wait their turn to see the doctors at the daily clinics.

A used ambulance was consigned to the Mennonite General Hospital by the Department of Health in January, 1945. This vehicle proved useful in transporting patients to and from the hospital. Other medical equipment was added from time to time as the program developed and as funds permitted, but the hospital never possessed as elaborate equipment as one would expect to find in a well-equipped hospital in the States. An official from the Department of Health recently stated that what he admired about the Mennonites was their ability to do so much with such limited facilities.

A few statistics from the annual report of 1945 will give a fair idea of the quantity of medical service rendered during the year. The number of patients hospitalized was 1,134, with a total of 6,687 patient days. The number of operations performed was 834—240 majors and 594 minors. The outpatient department showed a record of 9,335 patient visits, with 4,164 of that number new patients. The laboratory gave 1,002 medical X rays, 2,576 stool examinations, and 1,258 urinalyses.

A new phase of service was added to the medical program in 1945, namely, medical social work. Wilbur Nachtigall began this work by making community surveys to determine more nearly the health problems of the community. Follow-up work was also done among tuberculosis patients, in an effort to isolate them from their families to prevent the further spread of contagion. Medical social work was continued as a permanent part of the medical program.

Another very important medical service conducted by the La Plata Mennonite Project was the operation of the medical clinics in the Department of Health dispensaries. The general plan was that the Mennonite General Hospital would become the focal point of the medical program and as personnel and facilities were available the medical program would be expanded into the dispensaries. There were five such dispensaries within the PRRA region assigned to the MCC; namely, La Plata, Toita, Buena Vista, Rincón, and Pasarell (Comerio). These clinics had formerly been operated by Department of Health doctors, but during the war there were not sufficient doctors to keep the dispensaries properly staffed. At a meeting of the Brumbaugh unit directors in January, 1944, Rufus B. King announced that the Department of Health was willing and anxious to have unit doctors staff the rural dispensaries, and that they would be willing to pay \$100 a month to each doctor conducting the clinics. Several weeks later, however, King was informed that the Department could not legally make payments to CPS doctors; namely, Dr. Potts at Zalduondo and Dr. Preheim at La Plata.

Patients waiting to see the doctor on a clinic day at the La Plata Mennonite General Hospital.

*Courtesy El Mundo*









In spite of the decision against paying the doctors to conduct the clinics, the La Plata dispensary was taken over by Dr. Preheim, April 1, 1944, with Department of Health approval. The clinics were operated without remuneration until September of the same year when the Department decided to pay the hospital for the clinics on a clinical basis rather than to pay the CPS doctor.

When the La Plata dispensary was taken over by the unit, the health department clinics had all but ceased functioning, especially after the opening of the Mennonite clinic in the hospital building in 1943. The clinic case load had dropped to approximately one patient per day. Theoretically three clinics were in operation—maternity and maternal hygiene, venereal disease, and pediatric.

The schedule of clinics was not changed but an effort was made to inject new life into them. All of the hospital clinic patients coming under the categories of the special clinics were then routed to the Department of Health dispensary where the doctor took care of them on his regular visits to the dispensary. This change helped to relieve the crowded condition of the hospital outpatient clinic.

Work was begun in the outlying dispensaries of Pulguillas (Coamo municipality), and Rincón (Cidra municipality) during the last months of 1944 and the early months of 1945. The Pasarell (Comerio municipality) dispensary was never staffed by the Mennonite doctors because of its unfavorable location in relation to the other dispensaries. Services to all of the outlying dispensaries except Pulguillas were continued until the spring of 1946, when Dr. Preheim returned to the States. The services to the Pulguillas dispensary were discontinued during the summer of 1945. In each of these dispensaries the following clinics were conducted: general, venereal disease, prenatal, and pediatric. The Buena Vista and Rincón dispensaries were worked by the doctor living at Buena Vista, while the Pulguillas and Toita dispensaries were worked by one of the doctors living at La Plata.

The opening of these dispensaries made it possible for the people of five communities to receive medical services. Patients who needed care that could not be given in the dispensaries, or who needed hospitalization, were referred to the Mennonite General Hospital. Some of the patients at Buena Vista and Rincón were referred to a private clinic in Cayey where Dr. Preheim had a working agreement with the doctor in charge whereby he assisted in the surgery referred to the clinic.

Dr. Preheim made an interesting analytical study of the first 1,000 patients attending the Rincón and Buena Vista dispensaries. Of the

The prevalence of venereal disease makes it necessary to take serologies on many of the patients who attend the medical clinics.

total number of patients, 500 from each dispensary, 60 per cent were female and 40 per cent were male; 77 per cent came from outside the immediate communities, with 15 per cent coming from PRRA resettlers' homes; 37 per cent were illiterate, with 3.5 per cent having reached the eighth grade. 67.5 per cent were infested with intestinal parasites and 10.1 per cent severe anemia, with 55.6 per cent being moderately anemic. The percentage of syphilitic infection was 8.9 per cent. The Buena Vista dispensary serviced a relatively rural region. The syphilitic infection was considerably higher in the urban community, whereas the parasite infestation was much higher in the rural community. Other than these two points the statistics were much the same in urban and rural communities.

The clinic records of the five Department of Health dispensaries visited by the Mennonite doctors reveal that 15,586 patients attended the clinics during the year 1945. This figure, added to the total number of patients seen in the outpatient department of the hospital, shows that almost 25,000 patients were attended by the three Mennonite doctors during the year 1945. The clinic and hospital service was rendered by the three doctors, along with their competent staff of nurses, laboratory technicians, hospital attendants, and nurse-aides. The total medical staff consisted of sixteen continental workers and five Puerto Rican nurse-aides, plus the assistance of Department of Health nurses and secretaries at the dispensaries. These figures are not a complete evaluation of the medical program. They serve to show only the quantity of work performed. A full evaluation would consider the extent to which it met the physical and spiritual needs of the patients.

The La Plata unit was the only one of the three CPS units able to offer dental service to the people of the community, since none of the other units had a dentist. One need only to observe the teeth of a few school children to conclude that dental service is one of the greatest physical needs of the people. Dr. Earl Stover was granted permission by his Selective Service Board to go to Puerto Rico and work under the Mennonite Central Committee. He and Mrs. Stover, a dental hygienist, arrived in Puerto Rico in August, 1944. At the unit staff meeting in September it was decided that the dental service should be developed by Dr. Stover as a part of the total medical program of the unit. It was also decided that Dr. and Mrs. Stover would be available to work with school children's teeth in the community-building program. The dental service followed the general medical policy that those who were able

Many of the patients that come to the hospital are carried down the mountains in hammocks suspended from bamboo poles. Those coming from outside the community are frequently brought in *guagitas* (station wagons).

Courtesy *El Mundo*





should pay for dental materials used, except where such materials were furnished by the Department of Health.

The dental equipment did not arrive until October 20, 1944, thereby causing a delay in getting the dental program started. Since there was insufficient space available in the La Plata hospital for the dental office, the Department of Health gave permission to set aside two rooms in the La Plata dispensary for the office. The office was made ready and repaired by the unit construction men and was officially opened to the community in December, 1944.

Free dental service was extended to the continental workers of the three CPS units. This was valuable to the CPS men since the cost of dental work on the island was extremely high.

The dental office co-operated closely with the school health and physical fitness program by giving dental care to the many school children referred in by the nurse in charge. While the dentist was waiting for his office equipment to arrive, he and the hygienist went into the schools and held dental clinics there. After the office was completed it was found much more satisfactory to refer the children to the dental office, since the schools did not have the necessary facilities for conducting clinics.

The dental report at the end of 1945 showed that during the year 5,701 patients were seen by the dentist, 2,523 of whom were new patients. Of this number, 2,086 received special examinations, 582 prophylactics, 343 pyorrhea treatments, 1,516 restoration fillings, 71 dentures, 96 dentures adjusted, 5 bridges, 241 impressions, and 5,268 extractions. These figures indicate the terrible condition found among the teeth of the people of the La Plata Valley, and that this need was being met by the unit dentist and his wife.

It was generally agreed that the health program had hardly touched one of the major health problems, namely, community sanitation. In many instances children were given treatments for parasites, only to return at a later date reinfested. With the high percentage of parasitic infestation, as has previously been noted, it appeared that the only logical way to get to the basis of the problem was to clean up the communities by first starting with a privy program. Other units, especially Zalduondo, had gone ahead on a privy program, and their experiences proved valuable in planning an effective La Plata program. All of the resettlers' homes had at one time had sanitary privies installed, but a survey revealed that more than 90 per cent were filled and no effort had been made to move them to new pits.

The sanitation program was launched in the summer of 1945 in two communities—Buena Vista and Pasarell (Comerio). Wyman Sundheimer transferred from the community building program in August to assist



Hugh Hostetler in the privy program at Buena Vista. Victor Buller was transferred from La Plata to Pasarell to organize the privy program in that community. The sanitation condition was found to be the same in both communities. Most of the privies were filled and the families were not using them.

The first step in setting up the program was to contact the occupants of the house and talk to them about the advisability of moving the latrine so as to make their surroundings more sanitary. The owner then agreed to dig the new hole and the unit worker agreed to help move the old platform. Usually the resettlers saw the need of a more sanitary privy and were willing to do their part of the agreement. The report of the sanitation program at the end of 1945, less than six months after its beginning, showed that in addition to the making of community surveys, 85 per cent of the latrine work was completed among the 100 families of the Pasarell community, and 67 per cent of the latrines of the 147 families of the Buena Vista community were completed. The major part of the sanitation program as it was developed in the other communities coming within the jurisdiction of the medical program was carried out during the following two years.

The subsidizing of the future medical program was a question of early concern to the administrative officials of the respective church agencies. The subject was first officially approached in September, 1943, when Rufus B. King, Brumbaugh director; and Leland Brubaker, BSC executive secretary; met in conference with Governor Rexford G. Tugwell; Dr. Antonio Fernós, Commissioner of Health; Guillermo Esteves, assistant director of PRRA; and A. M. de Andino, chief of PRRA liquidation. At this time the hospital programs of the Mennonites and Friends had not yet materialized, thus it was difficult to present any figures showing financial needs. The Castañer program had matured to a point where a definite figure could be presented on the yearly cost of operating the hospital. The government officials agreed to keep the way open for a united representation of funds, if the various groups wished to administer programs similar to that at Castañer. The figure suggested for Castañer was \$20,000, which was 50 per cent of the total expenditure for the current budget.

The doctors of the three units in a meeting, March, 1944, discussed the question of government aid in subsidizing the medical programs of the three units. They recommended to the unit directors that Rufus B. King and A. M. de Andino go to the Department of Health to seek financial aid. It was suggested that the Department of Health include in its annual budget provision to subsidize the medical as well as the hospital programs of the three projects.

In November of the same year, King approached the executive



secretaries of the service agencies on this question of asking for government subsidization of the medical programs. He indicated that it would be necessary to secure the support of the Governor and the Commissioner of Health. He proposed that the latter be asked to include an item in his budget to cover "that which would be necessary to insure the continuation of the work." A figure of forty or fifty thousand dollars was proposed to the Commission for all three units. King asked that the respective church agencies decide by the middle of December if they wanted to become a party to the application for the subsidy. He indicated that government officials were interested that the medical programs be continued and he was optimistic that they might work for the subsidy. The agencies expressed themselves favorably providing the subsidy from the Insular Government would not in any way interfere with their planning and administering their own medical programs. The respective units were therefore asked to submit their budgets for the period from July 1, 1945, to June 30, 1946. It was agreed by the unit directors at their monthly meeting that a 50 per cent subsidy would be a reasonable request. The budget figures as submitted by each project were Castañer \$40,000, La Plata \$42,000, and Zaldondo \$14,000.

Director King with his secretary, Paul Weaver, and A. M. de Andino, met in conference with acting Commissioner of Health, José Gándara, December, 1944, and made the official request for a \$50,000 government subsidy to be distributed to the units according to the following proportions: Castañer, \$20,000; La Plata, \$20,000; and Zaldondo, \$10,000. In making the request it was agreed that if the subsidy should be in cash the units would assume full responsibility for purchasing drugs, supplies, and hospital equipment. It was also agreed that the unit doctors would continue to serve the Department of Health dispensaries as previously. A summary of medical services was also presented to the acting Commissioner of Health. It was further agreed that if the Department of Health saw fit to grant the subsidy, the church agencies would endeavor to continue the medical programs after the war in the same manner except that they would need to use volunteer workers in place of CPS men. It was pointed out that a major factor in being able to offer a high quality of medical service to the people of Puerto Rico at a minimum cost was that the programs had used CPS men on a maintenance basis.

Dr. Antonio Fernós in a conference with King, January, 1945, informed him that since the Zaldondo project was not operating a hospital its subsidy request was referred to the public health division of the Department of Health. He stated that the Department of Health could consider only the two hospital requests, those of La Plata and Castañer. He proposed that a statement be made on each hospital, giv-

ing the hospital capacity, area of service, barrios served, and hospital staff. He also asked for a report of the present clinic programs which received Insular money. In accordance with these requests a report of each hospital was submitted to the Commissioner. Dr. Fernós reported in June that he had the matter of the subsidy for the La Plata and Castañer hospitals before him and hoped to arrive at an early agreement. A question was raised concerning sectarian names on government buildings and accepting government money for work being carried on in such buildings. This issue, however, was never carried far enough to interfere with approval of the subsidy.

At the July meeting of the Brumbaugh directors they discussed the provisions that should be included in the contracts. It was agreed that the contracts should include such points as the barrios served, that the hospitals be permitted to receive money from inpatients and outpatients, that the hospitals should be supplied with ambulances, and that the payments continue for the dispensary clinics.

There was considerable delay in the issuing of the contracts. They were held up in September, 1945, pending an investigation of the hospitals by an official of the Department of Health to ascertain the manner in which the money would be used. The contracts were finally received, with Castañer receiving theirs September, 1945, and La Plata the following month. Since October, 1945, the Mennonite General Hospital has received approximately \$20,000 annually to help cover the cost of caring for indigent patients. Each month a list of indigent patients, whose hospitalization is covered by the subsidy, is submitted to the Department of Health for approval before the monthly subsidy payments are made. Each year the subsidy is requested and included in the annual budget of the Department of Health. There is a question whether the hospital could have continued operation during the postwar years without the subsidy grant. And through it a large number of poor rural Puerto Rican people have been able to receive medical service.

## **LA PLATA MEDICAL PROGRAM, 1946-47**

The medical program of 1946-47 followed rather consistently the program of the previous years, except that with the discontinuation of the outlying clinics in the early part of 1946, medical service could no longer be given to those communities. Dr. H. Clair Amstutz served as the medical director from January, 1945, until July, 1947, when he was replaced by Dr. Charles Hertzler. Dr. George D. Troyer also continued as a part-time doctor, having served on the La Plata medical staff since December, 1944. (He had worked in the service program at La Plata over a longer period of time than any other one worker.) Linda Reimer

served as superintendent of nurses during 1946 and was replaced by Mrs. Ellwyn Hartzler who occupied that position through 1947. The few changes in the administration of the medical program helped it to follow consistent medical policies in serving the valley.

A number of improvements were made in the hospital building in 1946. An extension, added to the end of the structure, became the new operating room. Ventilators were installed in the roof, and a front porch was constructed in order that clinic patients need not wait in the rain and sun to see the doctor. The materials for these improvements were furnished by PRRA, while the community donated over \$500 toward covering the labor costs.

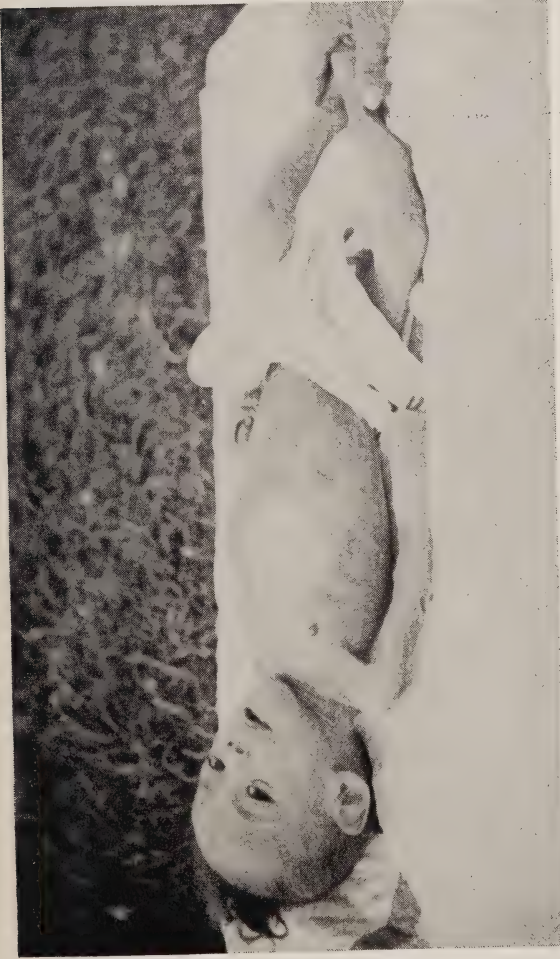
The experiences of the medical staff during these two years were similar to those of previous years. Progress in fighting disease in a land so crowded with people was slow, and it soon became evident that the medical program would never completely remedy all the physical ills of the valley. Dr. Andrew Cordier spoke with reason when he said, following his visit to Puerto Rico in 1942, that it would take a thousand men a thousand years to reconstruct Puerto Rico.

One of the most serious killers of Puerto Rico was, and still is, tuberculosis. Without adequate hospital facilities to accommodate all the active cases of tuberculosis, a solution to the problem seemed improbable. A case described by the unit medical social worker will show how difficult it was to arrive at a solution to the problem.

"The case of María was typical of thousands on the Island. María is sixteen years of age. Her mother is a widow. Her father died two years ago of 'a disease of the chest.' She became ill, and on examination it was found that María now had moderately advanced tuberculosis with cavitation. (Almost invariably there is a history of tuberculosis in the family which shows the results of ignorance of the disease and its treatment. One woman who came to the hospital was from a family in which seven persons had died of tuberculosis.) María's home is a wooden shack about fifteen feet square, located in the slum section of Aibonito. María sleeps on the only bed because she is sick. Her mother, sister, brother, and two nieces sleep either in a hammock or on the floor in the same room. The sister is at the present time looking for work, but cannot find employment. The family receives \$7.50 monthly from a public welfare organization. Beyond this they are at the grace of their neighbors who sometimes give them food, but since the financial condition of the neighbors is nearly the same, the income from this source is very meager.

"The girl should be sent to a sanatorium, but already the few sanatoriums on the Island are full beyond capacity. Thus the family lives, skimping on its own food in order to give María the food she needs,

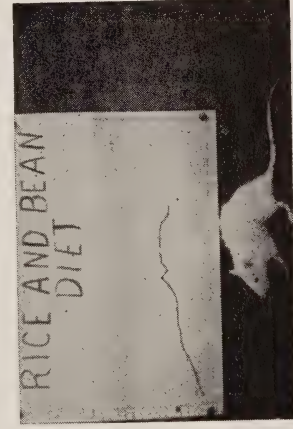




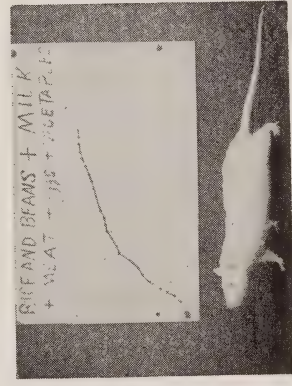
This seven-month-old baby weighed nine pounds when admitted to the La Plata hospital. His diet had consisted of pear juice, cereal, and viandas.



When discharged less than two months later he was a healthy, happy baby weighing fourteen pounds.



Malnutrition stunted this rat, fed only rice and beans.



This rat contrasts the effect of adequate diet.

meanwhile lowering the resistance of their own bodies to the dread disease with which they are in constant contact."

This incident shows the complications one encounters in fighting a disease like tuberculosis which is so closely coupled with poverty and ignorance. More and more the workers who remained in Puerto Rico for a longer period of time came to realize that the program of service must be broadened to touch every phase of life.

Another incident, related by the hospital superintendent in 1947, shows that the problem of malnutrition in the community was not solved after three years of service.

"The voice was familiar and the words were a repetition of those we hear so frequently in the hospital. 'Dr. Amstutz has sent another malnutrition case from the medical center for admission.' The words were those of Lucila, our Puerto Rican secretary. The chart was placed on the nurse's desk. . . . Behind her stood a tall, thin, awkward-looking specimen of manhood carrying a bundle of rags from which peered two very scared and sunken eyes. A nurse-aide was summoned to take the child and carry out the routine admission procedures—bath, search for lice, taking of temperature and weight. Lucila turned and left, taking the father back to the clinic exit.

"The registered nurse on duty picked up the chart to read the record. This is what she found: 'Antonio Juan, age two years, the second youngest child in a family of ten children. Father states he has had a cold for three months and cries all the time. Child is extremely potbellied and emaciated.' It seemed incredible that the child was two years old for the nurse-aide had just brought the report that he weighed eleven pounds.

"The nurse turned to the order sheet, 'vitamins, cod liver oil, and feed every three hours.' Deciding to take a look at the youngster herself, she found the nurse-aide already massaging the stringy head of hair vigorously with kerosene while the child was protesting weakly. Upon inquiring she learned that numerous lice and many, many eggs were seen. There was very little flesh on Antonio's body. The ribs could be counted at a distance. The appendages seemed to be only bone and skin, and his wrinkled face looked old. He was so weak he could not sit up without the aid of a sturdy hand.

"At supper time the tray brought to his crib-side contained a glass of milk, a piece of toast, pureed vegetable, and some fruit. A nurse-aide picked up Antonio and held him on her lap to feed him. The milk and toast were probably the only tastes he recognized and those he did not want. The vegetables and fruit were foreign to him—nothing like the rice and beans they had fed him at home.

"The first few weeks Antonio's personality was anything but pleasant

and attractive. His cry was weak and more or less as one in distress. When spoken to or moved he whimpered as if in misery or pain. He was weighed every two days, and with the first week's weight recordings it was found he had lost instead of gained.

"One morning, a month later, when the doctor walked into the children's ward he found the child sitting straight up without support, wearing a broad smile on his face. He still appeared quite thin, but he now enjoyed attention and cast longing glances when the food tray was ushered in.

"For another month he stayed in the hospital improving his eating habits, gaining weight, and generally becoming a pet among the workers. The lice had long before disappeared, the hospital orderly had given him a haircut, and he looked clean and lovable.

"Then one day the doctor said he could be discharged, with feeding instructions to the parents, a medical preparation, and a routine date to child clinic. The parents came to visit that afternoon, seemed happy over their child's recovery, and thanked the nurse who conveyed the doctor's message. Antonio cried as the parents carried him from the hospital. . . ."

Antonio was probably one of the extreme cases of malnutrition, but there have been numerous cases equally as bad, and perhaps a few worse. From observation it appears that the frequency of extreme malnutrition cases has decreased and at the present time not nearly so many extremely malnourished children are brought to the clinic as in the beginning years. Most of those that come in now are brought from up in the mountains, a considerable distance from the hospital. This infrequency of malnutrition cases in recent years may be due to a number of factors, but it is an encouraging thought that perhaps the total program is helping to reduce the incidence of malnutrition.

A hospital is an institution which must operate a twenty-four-hour day. The hospital does not close when the clinic door closes, nor when the meal bell rings. Whether it is a little rural hospital among the mountains of Puerto Rico, or a large city hospital in the States, provision must be made to care for the sick each hour of the day and night. Many times when the rest of the world is relaxed in slumber a doctor is laboring to save a life or a nurse is busy trying to ease the pain of a sick patient. Many times the doctors at La Plata have begun a busy clinic day tired and unrested because they spent almost the entire night doing emergency operations, or delivering babies. A Supernatural Power has often aided one doctor in performing the work which would be considered a job for two doctors in the States. Nurses have worked eight-hour-day shifts only to be called to the hospital three or four times during the night.



Whether the patient was a Puerto Rican jíbaro, or a wealthy land-lord, his wife was equally sacred in the eyes of a Christian doctor or nurse. Numerous times nurses, doctors, and attendants have worked almost all night trying to save the life of a mountain jíbaro who got discouraged with life and decided to take a full dose of Paris green. Many hours have been spent trying to save the life of a wretched drunk who came out of a fight with a deep knife wound in the back, a machete laceration on the head, or perhaps a bullet in the intestines. The saving of a life and the easing of pain are of first concern to the medical staff of a Christian hospital, though it may mean sacrifice and hardship on the part of the worker.

The following description will show the cheerful manner in which a Christian nurse assumed the obligation of her shift, which was frequently called the "graveyard shift."

"It is eleven o'clock, and while everyone else is snuggling down for a much-deserved rest, the night nurse wends her way to the hospital for her vigil of the night. As she arrives at the nurses' station she automatically raises her eyes to the clock in the corner to be sure that she has not arrived two minutes too early, nor more than five minutes late. Here she gets the report of a very busy day, with two emergencies late in the evening: one a little girl with a gash in her forehead which required several stitches; the other a young man with a compound fracture of the arm.

"After bidding good night to the retiring nurse, it is always interesting to see that our little nurse-aide, going off duty, is safely tucked in for the night. How we wish for several orderlies so the girls would not need to do these duties of the night which are far too heavy for them!

"Now a glance at the charts, and we see another malnutrition case has been admitted, a two-year-old child weighing sixteen pounds. 'Un-speakably filthy, full of scabies; admit to hospital for clean up,' but as we take a glimpse at the child, our feelings are changed to that of pity, mingled, perhaps, with a bit of disgust to think that any mother could thus neglect her child. But we must hurry through the rest of the charts to note if there are any new orders. It is already twelve o'clock—time for the regular round of injections, medicines, and general observations. Over here is a patient who has not been asleep yet. Here is one who has lots of pain. Both need extra medications.

"With a little prayer that we need not disturb the doctor, who has already seen over 100 patients during the day, we sit down to the desk to draw the midnight lines on all the charts, record all medications and treatments given, write the orders for the following day, make new medication cards and try to be sure that all new orders are checked. Why, it's two o'clock already, and there's still lots to be done. Did I forget

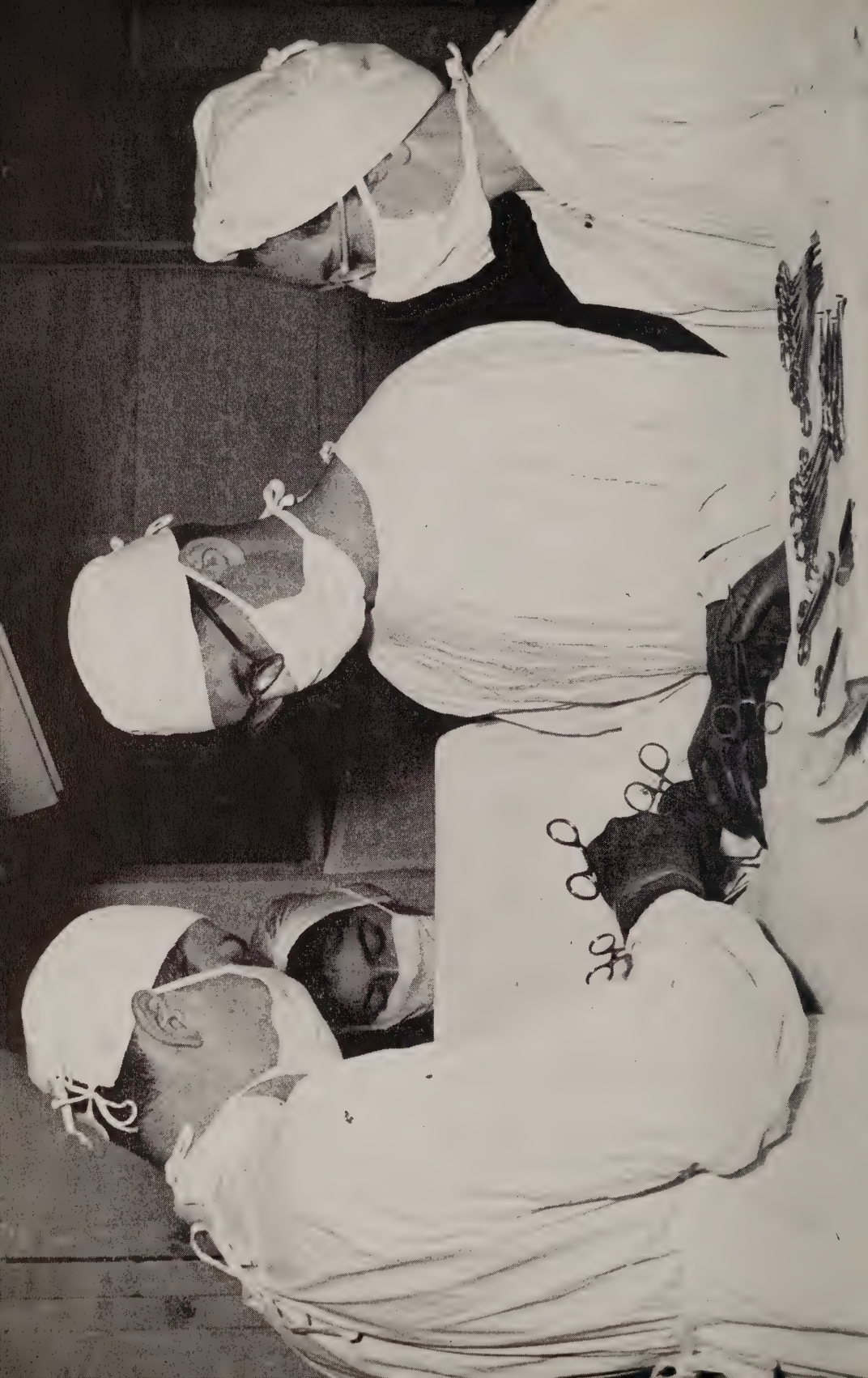
the midnight census report? Shall I go back to the clinic to do the scrubbing there? All the floors need to be scrubbed, for tomorrow is surgery, but first we need to dust and check all the supplies in the treatment room. . . .

"Then there was the time a station wagon drove to the door with a man who wished to see the doctor right away; he was sure he was going to die. The odor of his breath proved this a case for tact and not for the doctor. So it was decided to give him cardio-respiratory pills in the form of sodium bicarbonate, with the warning that he should not take more than two every four hours, because they were very strong. This seemed to do the trick and apparently the man is alive today, for we have heard nothing from him."

The La Plata Mennonite General Hospital for the two-year period of 1946 and 1947, again performed a record of service to the people of the valley. The quantity of medical service naturally decreased since during the greater part of the two-year period there was only one full-time doctor and one part-time doctor as compared to three full-time doctors the preceding year. During the summer months of 1947 the doctors were assisted by Paul Brenneman, a medical student from the States. The following summer, medical student Rohrer Eshleman assisted in the program. For this two-year period the medical records show that 1,835 patients were hospitalized with a total of 14,712 hospital-patient days. During the same two-year period 356 major and 1,179 minor operations were performed. The hospital laboratory took 1,810 medical X rays, 1,167 dental X rays, 4,966 stool examinations, 2,580 urinalyses, 589 blood counts, 235 Kahn tests, and numerous other tests. The outpatient department of the hospital showed a total of 17,327 patient visits with 6,058 new patients during the same two-year period.

The unit doctor continued to conduct clinics at the La Plata health dispensary. The following weekly clinics were conducted: general, pediatric, venereal disease, tuberculosis, and prenatal (biweekly). The tuberculosis clinic became the most active due to the high incidence of tuberculosis. During the year of 1946, over 200 cases of tuberculosis were discovered, forty of which were classified as suspicious or arrested. Forty-one of the total number were placed under careful observation; twenty were under pneumothorax treatments; thirty were admitted to sanatoriums, ten of whom died there; eighteen others were known to have died in the homes. The clinic was unable to help thirty of the advanced cases in the homes, and fifteen others were lost through moving or were referred elsewhere.

During the years 1946 and 1947 the dentist gave four days each week to the La Plata clinic. His remaining time was devoted to his private office in Aibonito. The following is a report of the major dental





service rendered through the La Plata dental office: 3,830 patients seen, 1,341 new patients seen, 1,361 special examinations, 146 oral prophylactics, 1,066 fillings, 158 pyorrhea treatments, 76 dentures, and 2,839 extractions.

The public school health service, which was begun in 1944 as a part of the health and physical fitness program, was transferred from the community-building department to the medical department in 1946. Whereas the school health service of 1944-45 extended to the schools of three municipalities, it was limited in 1946-47 to the schools of the Aibonito municipality. It therefore became possible to give medical service to more children in the elementary grades of the small mountain schools of the municipality. The nurse worked out into the rural schools from her clinic office located in the urban elementary school of Aibonito. The public school health service was discontinued following the close of the school year in the spring of 1947, when Edna Peters, the school health nurse, returned to the States and there was no replacement available. The closing of this part of the program cut the unit off from the contact it had had with hundreds of school children who had received help from the nurse and school clinics.

The following report, covering the period of January, 1946, to June, 1947, reveals the quantity of service given to the public school children by the nurse, her nurse-aide assistant, and the doctor and dentist who helped in the clinics: children examined by nurse, 1,876; children referred to doctor at La Plata clinic, 505; children's teeth examined by nurse, 2,806; teeth extracted by dental mobile unit, 446; teeth filled by mobile unit, 89; teeth filled by La Plata dentist, 60; children immunized against smallpox, 672; children receiving tuberculin patch tests, 2,975; children receiving tonsillectomies at La Plata hospital, 61; children receiving eye examinations by nurse, 1,476; children referred to La Plata eye specialist, 80; children fitted with glasses, 30.

Early in 1946, the sanitation projects were completed in the Buena Vista and Comerío regions, and in June of the same year the program was launched in the immediate La Plata area. The survey made in the area revealed that 75 per cent of the PRRA homes which at one time had sanitary privies no longer had sanitary disposal facilities. Outside of the PRRA project over 99 per cent of the homes had no latrines. The La Plata sanitation program took a threefold heading—community sanitation, hookworm control, and privy program. In the community survey it was found that hookworm was the most prevalent of the parasites.

In setting up the program the community was divided into small districts of about twenty homes. Each district was completed before an operation at the Mennonite General Hospital.

moving into another. The program consisted of six phases of work. First, a survey was made for the purpose of learning the condition of the homes, to estimate the materials needed, and to introduce the people to the program. In December, 1946, 435 homes had been surveyed. Second, the Federal and Insular officials were contacted in an effort to secure the needed materials. As of December 1946, \$3,200 worth of materials were contributed by government agencies. Third, the unit sanitation men assisted the people in repairing or moving old privies or in the construction of new ones. In this the people were encouraged to do as much of the actual work as possible. Fourth, after the completion of the privy construction or repair, stool specimens were collected from each member of the family and submitted to the hospital laboratory. In the La Plata region, in 1946, 70 per cent were found to be infested with parasites. Fifth, all who were found to have positive stool specimens were contacted and given treatments to rid them of parasites. Sixth, follow-up work in educating the people on sanitation was the final and most important step of the program. Personal home visitations were made in which posters and albums were distributed to help train the family to be more conscious of sanitation about the home.

The percentage of parasite infestation dropped considerably in the community as the sanitation work continued. With a systematic program of sanitation covering the entire Island, it is possible that intestinal parasites, which are sapping the energy from Puerto Rico's population, might be completely eradicated. In the year of 1946, 162 latrines were completed, seventy-three of which were in non-PRRA areas. There were 654 stool specimens collected, and 189 persons received treatments. Two hundred and ninety-five follow-up visits were made to the homes. In 1947, 107 new latrines were installed in PRRA regions and fifty were moved or repaired. In the non-PRRA regions 282 units were installed.

## **LA PLATA MEDICAL PROGRAM, 1948-49**

The medical program of 1948-49 saw the following changes in administrative personnel: Dr. Frederick Swartzendruber replaced Dr. Charles Hertzler as medical director, April, 1949; Louisie Deckert replaced Mrs. Ellwyn Hartzler as superintendent of the hospital following the latter's return to the States.

The specific objectives as outlined by the medical staff in 1948 were as follows: to render medical and surgical service to those in need; to promote a Christian attitude in the hospital in order that others may see the deep motivation of Christian love which prompts workers to render Christian medical service; to assist the people in better caring for their bodies and thus preventing the need for remedial service; to train Puerto

Rican workers to grasp the spirit of Christian service in order that they might reflect that same spirit to their fellow man. These had probably been the objectives of the medical program from the beginning, but the enumeration of them helped to make the staff more conscious of what the medical program should do in the community.

The tuberculosis clinic continued to be one of the most important clinics of the hospital. The seriousness of the disease made it imperative that the tuberculosis clinic be conducted each week as a permanent part of any effective medical program in Puerto Rico. This clinic could not even be closed for one week without causing suffering on the part of the patients under treatment. The crowded living conditions, ignorance, low wages, and poverty were still the basic factors contributing toward the prevalence of this disease. In spite of the great efforts put forth by government agencies to combat tuberculosis, it still caused more deaths in Puerto Rico in 1949 than any other disease. The Department of Health had conducted organized campaigns against tuberculosis for fourteen years, and yet the mortality rate was six times higher in Puerto Rico than in continental United States. In 1949 Puerto Rico had only 20 per cent of the necessary hospital facilities to take care of the tuberculosis cases on the Island which needed hospitalization. Since it was impossible to hospitalize all cases, the next best method of combating tuberculosis was to establish clinics that gave treatments on an ambulatory basis. All patients in the vicinity of La Plata who were able, came to the weekly tuberculosis clinics where they received treatment.

The La Plata tuberculosis clinic was held each Thursday. Mornings were devoted to fluoroscoping persons exposed to tuberculosis and giving pneumothorax and pneumoperitoneum treatments to regularly returning patients. These treatments consisted of injecting air into the lung cavity and under the diaphragm respectively, in order to collapse the lung and heal the tuberculosis process. These treatments usually continued for two or three years. Of the 127 patients under active treatment or observation in 1949, at the La Plata clinic, thirty-seven were receiving pneumothorax or pneumoperitoneum treatments. The afternoons of the tuberculosis clinics were devoted to interviewing new cases and outlining their treatment, and to checking cases under observation.

The following quotation from the La Plata doctor in 1949, shows how it is possible for people living in poor circumstances to control tuberculosis when it is reported in time and when the patient is willing to co-operate with the doctor and medical social worker.

"There was an air of apprehension and nervousness about the young man sitting on the bench in the La Plata clinic. Of the group of new patients who had just had their lungs examined with the fluoroscope, he was the only one for whom the doctor had ordered an X ray. Could



it be that he had . . . but what an unpleasant thought! His mother and two of his brothers had succumbed to the ravages of tuberculosis, but that was several years ago. In a few minutes he was called to the doctor's office for the report on the chest X ray.

"He was told that there was a shadow on the upper portion of the right lung due to tuberculosis. He did not have an advanced case of tuberculosis with cavities but rather had a good chance of recovery if he adopted certain habits of living and followed medical recommendations. It meant isolation from his wife and baby for their protection, good food, complete bed rest, check-ups at the tuberculosis clinics, and possibly an injection of a drug called streptomycin. If his condition became worse it might be necessary to collapse his lung.

"As he walked from the clinic door he realized that his friends would probably keep their distance when they heard of his condition. With this thought came the determination that he would do all possible in his power to co-operate with the doctor and nurse in the treatment of his condition. He mounted his horse and rode slowly up the mountain path to his little one-room house, or perhaps we should call it a shack, to break the sad news to his wife. It was quite an unpleasant surprise for her because she had considered him to be in good health except for an occasional cold. . . .

"It is to this clinic (tuberculosis) that the young man . . . returned eighteen months later for another check-up. He had done all within his limited means to combat the dreaded disease which had begun to grip him. He had isolated himself in a makeshift room built by friends and neighbors as an addition to his house. The social worker, a Puerto Rican herself, had rendered considerable aid in meeting the various problems of his new mode of life. Considering it not only her duty, but also a Christian privilege, she had visited his home many times to see that he and his family were supplied with food and to make sure that he understood and followed medical advice. Thus she formed an invaluable link between the clinic and the home. The patient had returned by horseback to the clinic every month in order to have the doctor check his progress. Due to the satisfactory healing of his condition the use of streptomycin and collapse of the lung were unnecessary. In fact, at the end of the eighteen months he was taken into the doctor's office to receive the good news that he had an arrested case and could now work several hours daily at light tasks. This case is an example of what can be done by the patient himself at home if he is willing to co-operate with the doctor in the treatment of his condition."

Another outstanding medical service rendered by the Mennonite General Hospital was that of restoring vision to those who were blind or almost blind. Those who leave the hospital with their sight restored

are usually doubly grateful, since life again takes on new joy and new meaning. Dr. George D. Troyer performed a large number of eye operations in which sight was restored to the patients. Cataracts appeared to be the most common eye disease requiring surgery. Cataracts are caused by various things. Some are present at birth, some are due to injuries, while many are due to old age. Dr. Troyer found that most cases came from the south coast of Puerto Rico where the sunshine is very intense and there is little rainfall. Also in this region there is a strong sea breeze and the air is full of dirt particles. He believed that these conditions were responsible for more cataract cases coming from that region.

After three years of eye surgery work in Puerto Rico, Dr. Troyer made a report on 122 cataract operations, with patients' ages ranging from four to eighty-four years. Of the 122 operations, twelve operations, or 9 per cent, were not successful. Over 90 per cent had better vision than before, while 46 per cent had practically normal vision and could return to their regular work; 15 per cent had poor results but could see sufficiently to get around by themselves, with vision better than before the operation. Many of these people who were too poor to pay the Island specialist's high medical fees would have continued in their blind or semi-blind state had they not received this service from Dr. Troyer.

By 1948 the medical social service had become an indispensable part of the medical program. In that year Lydia Esther Santiago, a Puerto Rican girl who received her degree in social work from the University of Puerto Rico, joined the unit to give half time to the medical program. Miss Santiago decided to prepare herself for social work as a result of her contact with a member of one of the other service projects. She succeeded John Driver, who had devoted almost two years to that position. The medical social worker of the La Plata Mennonite General Hospital went into the mountains of the municipalities of Cidra, Cayey, and Aibonito. Attending to tuberculosis patients absorbed much of the medical social worker's time, since those cases needed much care and counsel in treating the disease at home. Isolating the patient from other members of the family was a necessity, but the social worker encountered many problems in accomplishing this in homes already crowded, with little if any family income. In some cases the social worker had to plead with the landlord to get his help in providing an extra room for the infected one.

The medical social worker also gave assistance to cases of crippled children, cancer, and malnutrition. Her work included counseling and securing co-operation from other institutions in accepting cases which should be admitted. She also assisted in the distribution of clothing to needy families, especially to those who had no income because of family

sickness. Actually the primary assignment of the medical social worker was to act as the liaison between the home and the medical program. A big part of her job was breaking down the superstition and suspicion of many rural people toward medical service and aiding them in developing faith and confidence in it. This was not always easy for many of their attitudes had existed for centuries. It was often she who secured the available medical facilities for the people and then educated them in the use of those facilities. Without a medical social worker the program could not adequately serve the basic needs of the rural people.

Dr. Earl Stover's dental clinics continued as a part of the La Plata medical program until about the middle of 1949, after which the dental work was operated independently of the project. During the fall of 1949, the U.S. Public Health Service gave sodium fluoride treatments to nearly 400 school children of the community below the age of fourteen. This service was secured for the community by the unit administration. A series of three applications of sodium fluoride was given to each child at intervals of one week. Every three years the treatments are to be repeated. These fluoride treatments are still in the experimental stage but are about 40 per cent successful in reducing decay.

In August, 1949, a hospital-aide training school was begun as a part of the medical program. In previous years the nurse-aide training courses extended over a period of three months. This was not sufficient time to train a girl to be an efficient aide in the hospital. The new training course lasted for a year, at the end of which time seven girls completed all of the classes and received diplomas conferring upon them the right to work as hospital aides. The year's training was divided into four three-month periods. During the first three months courses were offered in academic subjects on a senior high school level. At the beginning of the second three-month period the girls were given more and more hospital responsibility and by the end of the year they were expected to be able to assume a considerable degree of responsibility in the hospital. During the year they received training in the following courses: psychology, medical diseases, English, physiology, nutrition, obstetrics, sociology, and hospital procedures. Fourteen girls began the course in August, 1949, and 50 per cent completed the work in August, 1950. Vesta Yoder and Mrs. Justus G. Holsinger served as superintendents of the school.

## **LA PLATA MEDICAL PROGRAM, JANUARY 1950, TO JULY 1951**

As in previous years, the medical service of 1950 and the first half of 1951 consisted of general medicine, general surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, fracture treatments, eye surgery, and care of





Graduating class of nurse aides. Instructors in back row.



Hospital staff at time of dedication.



First three nurse aides to graduate.



ambulatory patients. The basic purpose of the medical program remained the same—to provide a high quality of medical service to meet the medical needs of the rural people of Puerto Rico, many of whom were indigent patients. As in previous years the hospitalization of most indigent patients was covered by government subsidy. The most frequent hospital admissions during the year were children with diarrhea and vomiting, children with malnutrition, general surgical patients, routine maternity patients, and leg ulcer patients. During the year 1950, a total of 794 patients were hospitalized, and eighty-eight major and 292 minor operations were performed.

The outpatient department of the hospital consisted of a general clinic for people living in the La Plata vicinity, held on Monday mornings and Friday afternoons; general clinic for patients outside La Plata, held on Wednesdays; leg ulcer clinic alternating with prenatal clinic on Monday afternoons; clinic for patients who were able to pay average medical fees, held on Saturday mornings. Every other Tuesday afternoon a general clinic was conducted in the Rabanal community, located several miles from La Plata. During 1950, the La Plata outpatient clinic visits totaled 9,540, of which 2,522 were new cases. The Rabanal records showed a total of 1,934 clinic visits.

As in previous years, five Public Health Clinics were conducted at La Plata each week under the auspices of the Department of Health. Each Thursday forenoon pneumothorax and pneumoperitoneum treatments were administered to tuberculosis patients, and a tuberculosis diagnostic clinic was held in the afternoon. Streptomycin and paraminosilicylic acid were furnished to selected cases by the Department of Health. During the year, 2,097 patient visits were made to the tuberculosis clinic and 1,368 pneumothorax and pneumoperitoneum treatments were administered. The infant hygiene and prenatal clinics were conducted at the La Plata public health dispensary on alternate Tuesday afternoons and a school hygiene clinic was held on Friday mornings during the school year. A prenatal clinic was conducted at the Pulguillas public health dispensary each Monday morning.

Medical social service continued to be an important phase of the total medical program. As in previous years, the medical social worker's greatest contribution was in visiting families stricken with tuberculosis and educating them in isolation techniques. She also gave valuable assistance to many prenatal cases by helping them with medical and economic problems. Crippled children were referred to special institutions, and tuberculosis and other patients needing special care were referred

A Puerto Rican nurse aide gives medical care to a patient in the women's ward of the Mennonite General Hospital.

*Courtesy El Mundo*



to other hospitals. The medical social worker took care of 642 cases during 1950, and of this number eighty-four were referred to special institutions.

At the beginning of the 1950 school year the superintendent of schools of the Aibonito municipality requested a nurse from the project to conduct weekly clinics in the urban school. During the 1950-51 school year the nurse made thirty-nine visits to the school and took care of 331 children. Eighty-two of these were referred to a doctor and thirty to a dentist.

The sanitation program continued without interruption throughout the year 1950 and the first six months of 1951. A sanitation survey was made in the regions of Peñón, Matón, Salto, Cafetín, and Hoyo Frío, where latrines had previously been installed by unit sanitation men. Stool specimens were taken in these regions and persons infested with parasites were given treatments. During the latter part of 1950 and early part of 1951, the sanitation program was begun in the barrio Rabanal, where no sanitation work had ever been done. Few homes in this community had sanitary privies, and the percentage of parasite infestation was very high. During 1950, a total of forty-one latrines were installed, eighteen repaired, and seventy inspected. Stool specimens were taken on 1,131 persons and 2,026 parasite treatments were given. In June, 1951, two men were assigned to sanitation work, whereas for several years previously only one man had given a part of his time to this work.

Dr. Walter K. Massanari arrived August, 1950, and for a period of about ten months there were two full-time doctors on the staff. After Dr. Swartzendruber's leaving, Dr. Massanari became the only full-time doctor, assisted by the continuing part-time services of Dr. Troyer. During the first six months of 1950, the medical program suffered from an acute shortage of nursing personnel. The La Plata medical program needs a staff of five full-time nurses, one of whom is assigned to the outpatient department. During a four-month period in 1950, there were only two full-time nurses in the medical program. They frequently had to respond to emergency calls following the completion of a twelve-hour shift. The busy life of these nurses in a time like this can best be described by one of them, who related the routine duties of a typical Sunday.

"When a day here begins smoothly, it is bound to end like a nightmare. Let me take you with me on a routine Sunday here at La Plata. Having had morning devotions with fellow unit members following breakfast, I find myself in the nurses' station at 7:00 a.m. receiving the high lights of the night from Miss Leatherman. Then Fermina, the nurse-aide who has been in charge from eleven to seven, gives a complete re-

port of the night to the three nurse-aides and myself. After report we meet in the social worker's office for Spanish devotions.

"While I distribute the charts and greet each patient, the girls feed the babies and help other bedfast patients if necessary.

"Oh, yes! One begins the working schedule only to be interrupted by a patient in the clinic. On this day we find that our first emergency is a child with much abdominal pain for two days. After giving her prescribed medicines, I begin again to work on the schedule. When the schedule is completed, the doctor arrives to make his rounds. This takes from one to two hours, for there are dressings to change, and someone has forgotten to tell the doctor all about the pain he had a month ago in his back.

"After completing rounds I begin to copy orders and fill the prescribed medicines for discharged patients because patient No. 21 wants to leave on the 10:30 bus. She has received her medicines, her clinic card, and will pay little by little.

"There is another patient in the clinic. This time it is a young boy who has fallen from a tree. His face is badly abraded and he has pain in both wrists. Oh, yes, the tube is burned out on the X-ray machine, but the doctor says the boy has a fractured wrist. The alignment is good so we apply a splint and admit him to bed No. 29. Meanwhile a bus drives up with a woman who has a large laceration on her left leg due to a nail. She was given tetanus antitoxin last night but now has a severe infection at the site and a high fever. We also admit her for penicillin therapy and hot fomentations. The bell is ringing for lunch, but there are orders to be re-copied and medicines to give immediately.

"The visitors begin to arrive at 1:00 p.m. and ask about each of their friends in the hospital. From 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. one is kept busy trying to answer all the questions of the visitors, get some charting completed, and checking if all treatments and medicines have been given. Someone forgot to change the boric dressing on No. 27's leg ulcer, so that must be done. No. 17's hot water bottle is now a cold pack. The report to the nurse-aides on the 3-11 shift is given and the day girls depart.

"George is here for some medicine for his mother. She had been hospitalized for a long time for a herniated disc. Now she has severe abdominal pain. 'Does she have any other complaints, George?'

"I don't know but she was moaning much.' So after getting some pills for pain he departs. Thirty minutes later, before George reaches home, he meets a group bringing his mother to the hospital by hammock. She is examined and found to have a high fever and severe pelvic infection. After admitting her and carrying out prescribed orders I begin to eat my supper when a phone call comes stating that someone would like our doctor to come to the district hospital twenty-five miles away to see

their child who is very ill. You see, Sunday is a very difficult day to find any doctors.

"After supper charts are checked and things begin to take on some order. At 7:00 p.m. Miss Leatherman begins for the night.

"These are some of the high lights of the day. There is always the child who has stubbed his toe, cut his finger, has an abscess, or maybe even a toothache. After routine duties I retire hoping I have helped in some way to make someone's life happier. There is much joy in nursing these people, for it is interesting and offers an opportunity for testimony."

The average patient who visits the clinic or hospital has little idea of the routine duties that take place behind the scenes. Frequently he sees only the doctor's office and is not aware of the effort put forth by other workers in the diagnosis and treatment of his complaints. Much of this work is routine and lacks glamour. For example, the technician spends hours at the microscope looking for the tiny organisms that bring so much pain and discomfort to the human body. The following description is related by the graduate medical technician who volunteered three years of her time to the La Plata medical program:

"Does the word 'laboratory' bring to your mind shelves of dusty bottles and a disorganized array of equipment? A laboratory is really more interesting than its outward appearance may indicate. Those big sounding words with which the technician describes her work are not as mysterious as she may lead you to believe. Let me tell you how simple it is. Take for example these words. We all know 'ology' added to a word means study, so then bacteriology means a study of bacteria; parasitology, study of parasites; hematology, study of blood. When the technician speaks of a differential she is not referring to a part of a car but to the differentiation of the white corpuscles of your blood. A change in the proportions of the five different kinds of cells found in the normal blood stream is what aids the doctor in deciding whether a patient has appendicitis or merely a stomach ache.

"Another phase of blood study is blood chemistry. One important test in this group is blood sugars. Diabetics here are not only a problem to the doctor but to the technician also. How discouraging after two or three hours' work to find that your patient had coffee with sugar for breakfast, when he should have gone without breakfast and he is carried in with insulin shock. Now we have to give him sugar to counteract the insulin. There are times when the patient does exactly like what he is supposed to.

"Tuesday and Friday are parasite days. Every patient admitted to

The Mennonite General Hospital in 1947, after the addition of the roof, ventilators, and operating room extension.

*Courtesy El Mundo*





the hospital and clinic is routinely given an examination for parasites if he is willing to co-operate by bringing a stool specimen to the laboratory.

"Thursday, T.B. day, comes around in a hurry, especially when I have to get up at 4:30 to pump the stomachs of two or three patients in order to make a more thorough search for that little germ which they may have swallowed instead of coughing it up.

"Most of a technician's work is very exacting and requires careful attention and thought. A great feeling of responsibility rests upon a technician as she places blood at the disposal of the doctor for blood transfusions. Needless to say it is a relief to know that the patient didn't have a reaction.

"Here in La Plata the laboratory has a few responsibilities other than the laboratory work. Whenever necessary we help in other parts of the clinic. There is another task of the technician which should be mentioned and as I can't think of a mysterious name for it we will simply call it 'dish washing.'"

Several administrative changes took place during 1950 and 1951. Mrs. Royal Snyder, who replaced Louisie Deckert in the fall of 1949, as superintendent of the hospital, was assisted by Orpha Leatherman, who acted as superintendent during the disability of Mrs. Snyder. Mrs. Snyder was replaced as superintendent in June, 1951, by Ethel Zook.

Dr. Troyer was appointed medical director of the total Mennonite medical program in June, 1951, and Dr. Massanari was appointed assistant medical director, in direct charge of La Plata medical work. The Mission Board and MRC, upon the suggestion of Bender and Hartzler, recommended that the total medical work be placed under the administration of the service program. Previously both the mission and service programs had their separate medical work. When this recommendation becomes effective the medical clinics at Pulguillas, Rabanal, and other mission stations will be administered by the service program.

One of the great needs of the medical program has been a new hurricane-proof hospital building. The present frame barracks structure will probably some day succumb to a tropical hurricane. When this happens the project will suffer a heavy loss in expensive medical equipment and supplies. The Mission Board and MRC, in their study of the total medical program, have concluded that within the next five years the old hospital building at La Plata will need to be replaced by a new structure. Previous plans had called for the construction of a clinic and overnight hospital building at the Pulguillas mission station, to take care of the medical needs of that community. As a result of Hartzler's and Bender's visit to Puerto Rico, January, 1951, a new school building at Pulguillas was approved, making available the present school building for a clinic because of its more desirable location for public medical purposes.

Funds previously raised for building a clinic were designated for remodeling the school into a clinic building. Since this decision was made the Mission Board and MRC approved the appointment of a committee to begin plans toward the construction of a hospital building at La Plata.

One of the greatest handicaps in maintaining efficiency in the medical program was the fact that from the beginning the work was carried on largely by short-term personnel. It usually took a doctor or nurse from one to two years to command the Spanish language well enough to converse freely with the patient. It took an equal period of time to understand the temperament of the people and also to become acquainted with their environmental problems, which in many instances were basic causes of their health condition. Associated with this was the problem of certification of professional medical personnel who practiced their profession in Puerto Rico for an eighteen-month or two-year period. Examining board officials were reluctant to make exceptions to the laws which were rigid in defining the qualifications for the practice of medicine and nursing. Perhaps it appeared to them that the hospital was a place for young medical personnel to get valuable experience before beginning their regular practice in the States. It was also increasingly difficult to follow consistent policies in hospital and clinic operation with the constant change of medical personnel, many of whom had not previously had broad experience in their profession. In spite of this problem the medical personnel were able to establish a fine relationship with other medical personnel in Puerto Rico, and especially with the officials of the Department of Health. The contribution of the La Plata doctors in the treatment and control of tuberculosis in the La Plata vicinity was especially noticeable to the Department of Health officials, who frequently expressed appreciation for their efficient work in this field.

Another serious problem to the medical program was that of meeting the increasing costs of medical service and at the same time provide a high quality of service, available to the poor as well as to those able to pay. The increase in costs of medicines, foods, and labor in the postwar period placed a heavy burden upon the nonprofit charity institution, which was already furnishing medical care to many patients at less than cost. The La Plata medical program had three sources of income: namely; the \$20,000 government hospital subsidy which could be used only for the hospitalization of indigent patients; the funds received from the MRC; and the income from hospital and clinic fees.

When the Minimum Wage Board of Puerto Rico, in July, 1951, raised the minimum wages of hospital workers from twenty cents to thirty-one cents an hour, the hospital faced the problem of raising its fees and enforcing a stricter system of collecting bills, if services were to be continued for the poor rural people. The people of the community were tak-



en into confidence on the problem and agreed that the hospital and clinics should establish fees above what had previously been charged. The unit staff decided to charge fifty cents for clinic visits of La Plata people, one dollar for persons outside the La Plata community, and three dollars for visits by special appointment. Hospital rates, which were previously four dollars a day, were raised to five dollars. Whether or not this increase in medical fees will cover the added \$4,000 annual cost of wage increases remains to be seen.

## **FIVE**

### **Community Service**

The community service (building) program of the La Plata Mennonite Project operated full force during 1944 and 1945. The beginning of the school health and physical fitness program in August, 1944, brought the services of the Mennonite unit to thousands of boys and girls in four municipalities. The trained leadership made it possible to carry on in the schools a high quality program which won the admiration and respect of officials of the Department of Education. The attitude of the Department toward the work of the Mennonites in the schools can be seen from a letter from the Insular Commissioner of Education, José M. Gallardo, an appointee of the President of the United States: "I want to state emphatically that the Department of Education is more than well-pleased with your program of health and physical fitness. We only regret that it is impossible for you to extend it to other schools. It has been my pleasure to observe your men at work in some communities, and I must say that they are not only a great help in teaching health education and conducting extracurricular activities [related] to physical fitness, but they are a great inspiration to the community. Let me assure you that the schools will be happy to make it possible for as many instructors as you can furnish to work with our school children."

#### **CHILD FEEDING PROGRAM**

Many American school children enter the classroom each morning after having had a breakfast of fruit, milk, eggs, cereal, and toast. This has not been the case in Puerto Rico. Before the beginning of the milk stations and school lunch rooms, thousands of school children began each day without an adequate breakfast. Many of the breakfasts consisted of no more than a cup of black coffee and a cent's worth of bread. Mrs. Grace Tugwell, wife of the Governor, as head of the Insular Child Feeding Program, was cognizant of this situation among the children and began a program of milk distribution, through community milk stations, to children from the ages of two to fourteen. Mrs. Tugwell was invited by the unit director in 1943 to make an investigation of the possibility of

establishing a milk station at La Plata. She approved the opening of a station and also expressed her appreciation for the interest and co-operation that the unit was willing to give.

An abandoned canning center was changed into a food distribution center opened to the children of the community January 13, 1944. The canned milk was supplemented with prunes, eggs, sausages, corn meal, and oatmeal. This food was government surplus commodities and was furnished free to the children. Incidental things such as lard, sugar, and chocolate were furnished by the unit in order that the food might be more palatable to the children. The administration of the feeding program was largely in the hands of unit members assisted by two girls of the community who were given a small remuneration from funds of the child feeding program.

The milk station records show that by the end of the first year of operation, 19,365 breakfasts had been served with an average daily attendance of 138 children. The children during this period of time consumed over seven thousand cans of milk, ten cases of meat, 425 pounds of prunes, 350 pounds of corn meal, 125 pounds of oatmeal, 220 pounds of sugar, and thirty-four pounds of chocolate.

The station continued several years under unit supervision but the enrollment decreased considerably when the age limit was changed to include only preschool children above two years of age. The station was later turned over completely to the Public Welfare Department. Since the Public Welfare station could serve milk only to preschool children over two, who had to consume the milk in the station, another station was financed and operated by the unit. It supplied milk to children who lived too far away to come in each day. A careful check was kept on the milk which was taken to the home to make sure that it was not sold for cash and that the children who needed it received it. Since the large majority of the children needing milk were from the Salto barrio, a station was opened in that region in October, 1946, and the unit-supported station at La Plata was discontinued. The money to maintain the Salto station was donated by a group of people who visited La Plata with Governor Piñero on one occasion and expressed an interest in contributing toward the program. As the child-feeding program continued, it was realized that this was only a temporary solution to a deep-rooted economic problem. The Salto milk station was eventually turned over to the Public Welfare Department.

It was generally conceded by the unit that a goat project which would make available a good milk goat to a home might be a more rea-

The facial expressions of this small family are indicative of the hopeless spirits of many rural people destined to live and die in poverty.

Courtesy *El Mundo*





sonable solution to the family milk-supply problem than milk stations. This idea gave rise to the importation of four purebred goats which arrived in Puerto Rico in September, 1947. These purebred Toggenburg goats became the nucleus for the goat project which by the end of 1947 numbered twenty-three goats. Theoretically the ideal of loaning goats to poor families who needed milk for their children was a good one. Practically, however, the project did not prove to be too successful. Most families who were too poor to purchase milk for their children were also too poor to buy the necessary feed to keep the goats in first class condition. The families were encouraged to purchase the goats rather than to borrow them, in which case the goats received better care. More recently the loaning of goats was discontinued and the farm specialized more in supplying a good quality of breeding stock for the community. A number of small well-bred goats have been sold in the community, and two male goats are available for breeding service.

### COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The first-aid class which was begun in 1943 was completed in 1944 with around twelve persons receiving certificates. In addition to the English class for young people of the community, an English course was offered in Aibonito to the public school teachers. The first hour of the course was devoted to literature study and the second hour to the teaching of English songs for children, and English grammar. The two music clubs, boys' rhythm orchestra and girls' glee club, were continued and numerous public programs were given, among which was a program for the Commissioner of Education when he visited the school.

Most of the rural families of Puerto Rico have almost no reading material within the home in the way of magazines and daily papers. Many were eager to read but did not have money to subscribe to daily periodicals. To help meet this need a community paper was begun by the unit in co-operation with the school and PRRA in May, 1944. The paper was called *El Heraldo de La Plata*. The objectives of the paper were to help unify community spirit by carrying a section on community news, and to serve as a medium of promoting community education by carrying articles on health, agriculture, and home care. Many educational articles were contributed by authorities in their respective fields. In addition to the aforementioned objectives the paper also helped to create better understanding between the unit and the community. Announcements concerning medical policies were frequently run. Along

Margie Swartzendruber (Mrs.) conducts a kindergarten in the community center three mornings each week for the preschool children who will be eligible to attend school the following year.







with the increase in the community service program *El Heraldo* increased until by 1945 five hundred copies were mimeographed for distribution each month. *El Heraldo de La Plata* is still being mimeographed each month for distribution in the La Plata community. Though the paper has had no less than half a dozen different editors the objectives and organization remain the same as when it was started.

The purchase of a motion picture projector in 1946 made it possible to organize a systematic program of visual education for the communities. Educational films were shown regularly in three community centers until the closing of the Buena Vista and Rincón centers, after which the film program was limited to the La Plata community center and school. In 1949, the Commission of Sports and Recreation consigned a motion picture projector to the La Plata community center to replace the old one. With a new projector it was possible to again place more emphasis on the motion-picture program. The Commission of Sports and Recreation also made available its film library, whereas previously films were secured primarily from the Department of Education library. More recently a well organized program of educational films has been established whereby pictures are regularly shown every two weeks in the La Plata community center, a children's tuberculosis sanatorium in Aibonito, and a children's convalescent home in Aibonito.

The small community-center library was operated for community use since its beginning in 1943. The library contained about 300 volumes, a daily paper, and some magazines. Each day a number of young people visited the library to read the daily paper, and numerous school children and adults checked out books to read in their homes. Since there were almost no books or magazines in most of the homes, the library served a real purpose in providing good reading materials. From time to time new Spanish books have been added in order to keep an adequate supply.

In the fall of 1948 a kindergarten for preschool children was begun. Following a canvass of the community the kindergarten began with an enrollment of fifteen children who were planning to enter public school the following year. The kindergarten was conducted for a two-hour period three days each week. Activities included singing, stories, conversing, number work, health teaching, handwork, and recreation. A light lunch of crackers and milk was served in the middle of the morning, at which time the children were taught cleanliness and proper habits of health. During the spring months of 1949 as many as twenty or twenty-five children were attending the kindergarten. It was found that those who had attended the kindergarten were far in advance of other children when they entered public school the following year. Some were so far advanced that they were placed in the second grade soon after entering

school. The kindergarten has continued each school year since its opening in 1948. According to present plans it will be conducted five mornings each week during the school year of 1951-52.

In the fall of 1949 a nursery school was begun for children of the continental La Plata workers. Each Tuesday and Thursday from four to six children met in the community education office where they were given practice in the use of pencils and crayons. Part of the morning was devoted to stories and recreation. The primary purpose of the nursery school was to provide opportunity for the normal social development of the continental children.

Children's clubs and classes for young people were organized from time to time during the eight-year period that the community education program was in operation. The community education leader worked closely with the girls' 4-H club during 1947 and 1948. During the year 1950-51, more emphasis was placed on class and club work. English and music classes were organized for young people interested in improving their conversational English and learning more about the rudiments of music. Two boys' clubs were organized and held each week. The boys were trained in the art of wood carving. These clubs were made up largely of boys who regularly attended the Sunday school.

## **SCHOOL PROGRAM**

After a year of community center activities, the recreation leaders got together to organize a more effective recreational and health program in the communities. It was generally conceded that if the recreational program were attached to a permanent institution of the community it would be more effective and have more lasting results. The school, rather than the community center, seemed to be the logical institution of the community to become the center of the recreation program. With this common agreement the men of the community-service program had various meetings during the summer of 1944 to study more carefully recreational and health needs, and to draw up program objectives which would clarify how they might more nearly meet those needs.

By the end of the summer a health and physical fitness program was proposed which would operate in co-operation with the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration, Department of Education, and Insular Commission of Sports and Recreation. The central aim of the program was to assist the individual in his personal development and in his relationship to society. The specific objectives were: first, to help the individual develop a strong, healthy body by fostering poise, co-ordination, and skills; second, to assist him in developing the following social traits—worthy use of leisure, proper group spirit, desirable leadership qualities,

proper self-discipline, and proper respect for constituted authority; third, to help him develop proper attitudes, appreciations, and mental skills; fourth, to promote safety consciousness and safety habits. The objectives of the school health service, which was a part of the total school program, were: to aid the individual in the control and prevention of disease, to promote personal hygiene and community sanitation, and to discover, evaluate, and correct physical defects.

The health and physical fitness program endeavored to render three types of service to the school and community; namely, school physical education, the school health service, and school and community health education. The school physical education included regularly scheduled physical education classes in the public schools adjoining the community centers. These classes were taught to the junior high school students. The schools in which these classes were taught were: La Plata, Asomante, Toita, and Rincón Second Unit schools, and Cidra junior high school.

In addition to the physical education classes the instructors organized a Brumbaugh Junior League among the schools which participated in the physical education program. This league sponsored competitive sports in softball, volleyball, and basketball. Two games were played each week and at the end of each season a tournament was held. A pennant was awarded at the regular school commencement program to the leading school in each sport. At this time certificates were also awarded to each of the players of the respective sports. In addition to teaching physical education in the schools, each man supervised the recreation program of his community center in the evenings and also during the day when he was not teaching. The Comerío school did not enter the Brumbaugh League for two reasons: first, because it was located at a considerable distance from the other schools, making it difficult to transport players to the games; and second, because the Comerío school included both the senior and junior high school grades. The senior high school team coached by Roland Kaufman did, however, join a senior high school league in that vicinity.

The second type of service rendered to the public schools was school health service. This work was organized and directed by Salome Fast Holsinger in the school year of 1944-45, and the following year Edna Peters continued it. The school health service was begun in October, 1944, under the direction of the full-time nurse, assisted by a doctor, dentist, dental hygienist, and several helpers. Physical examinations were given first to the ball teams of the schools followed by routine examinations to certain grades of the junior high schools. Approximately 4,000

Continental workers take time out for recreation. Keeping a healthy body must be demonstrated as well as taught to the people.





children in the schools were visited by the health service nurse and her helpers.

After several months of routine examinations by the doctor in the school, a school clinic was held in the Mennonite General Hospital one-half day each week. Instead of the doctor's going each day to the school, the nurse referred the children who needed the care of a doctor to the school clinic. A school dental clinic was also set up at the La Plata dental office two half-days each week to take care of the children referred by the nurse. During the second year of the school health service program, the services were limited to the schools of the Aibonito municipality because one nurse could not take care of all the children needing medical care from the three municipalities served the previous year. The nurse was given a clinic office in the Aibonito elementary school. From it she was able to work out into the rural schools of the municipality. The school health service program was transferred to the medical program in 1946 and continued until 1947, when it was dropped because of the lack of medical personnel to continue it.

The health education was not organized into a definite program as were the other two phases of the health and physical fitness program. All of the health work in the schools, however, was by its very nature educational and served to make the students and parents more health conscious. Health classes were taught in some of the schools by the already overworked physical and education instructors. Numerous health films were shown in the schools and community centers to help make the students and parents more health conscious and also to teach them the rules of healthful living.

Another important phase of the school program was that of regular school teaching. In the spring of 1944, officials from the Department of Education made requests to use CPS men as teachers because of the acute shortage of teachers in Puerto Rico. A number of CPS men were experienced teachers. The possibility of using them for regular teaching positions was carefully studied by the Brumbaugh director in consultation with the executive secretaries of the service agencies and with A. M. de Andino. It was generally felt that since CPS men were theoretically federal property under the jurisdiction of Selective Service, they would not be free as individuals to sign contracts with the Insular Government. Since the status of a CPS assignee was not too clearly defined by law, there was a possibility that if CPS men were appointed to regular teaching positions the entire CPS program in Puerto Rico might be jeopardized. It was therefore decided that CPS men should not be appointed to regular teaching positions until after their release from Civilian Public Service.

Though CPS men themselves could not accept teaching positions



there was no logical reason why wives of these men might not accept such positions. This proved to be the solution to several problems. It helped solve the shortage of teachers and it enabled married men whose wives were qualified teachers to have their wives with them in Puerto Rico. Mrs. Richard Weaver accepted a position teaching English in the La Plata school for the school year of 1944-45. Mrs. Victor Buller and Carol Glick taught at the Baptist Academy at Barranquitas the same year, and the following year Mrs. Carl Lehman taught in the La Plata school. These teachers were on a non-CPS relief-worker basis and were considered as Mennonite Central Committee workers in the community service division of the La Plata project. Each year since 1945 Mennonite teachers have taught in the Barranquitas Baptist Academy but they have contracted directly with the Baptist Board.

There are no objective criteria for the evaluation of a program whose objective is to develop personality and promote better human relations. The results of such a program are reflected more in attitudes than in objective signs. Thus, the statistical report of the program shows only the extent of the work rather than the evaluation. The total evaluation can be shown only in the lives of the boys and girls which it influenced. From October, 1944, to December, 1945, 1,384 children were enrolled in physical education classes, 471 in regular classes, 138 in health education classes, 473 in school and center clubs, and 189 in music classes. In the school health service program for the school year of 1944-45, 827 children were referred by the school nurse to the hospital school clinic and 371 to the La Plata dental clinic. From the number referred to the clinic, ninety-one received tonsillectomies, 166 were given eye examinations by a specialist, fifty-one were fitted with glasses, and 604 received fluoroscopies and X rays. Among the children referred to the dental clinic, 267 extractions were performed and 96 received fillings. In the schools, 194 children were immunized against smallpox and 103 against diphtheria, and 1,765 were given the tuberculin patch test.

These figures show the nature and extent of the work conducted among the school children by the La Plata Mennonite Project. It can easily be understood why each year the Department of Education requested that the school health and physical fitness program be continued. With CPS demobilization in the winter of 1945 and spring of 1946 the school and center programs suffered heavily because of the shortage of personnel.

The total health and physical fitness program was in full operation for only one school year, 1944-45. The physical education classes were dropped in the Cidra and Rincón schools in the school year 1945-46, and in the Toita school the following year. The physical education classes were continued in the La Plata and Asomante schools until De-



cember, 1947, when they had to be discontinued because the project was without a recreation leader. It is encouraging to note, however, that some of the schools grasped the importance of organized physical education and continued classes under the direction of a regular teacher. In 1949, physical education classes were again organized in the La Plata school as a part of the community recreational program.

## COMMUNITY RECREATIONAL PROGRAM

The recreational program was expanded into three new community centers during the years of 1944-45. In January, 1944, James Hean began a community recreational program in the Buena Vista center, and in May of the same year Roman Gingerich opened recreational work in the Rincón center, while Albert Bohrer continued the La Plata program. By the end of the year Roland Kaufman had a recreational program going in the Pasarell center. Thus, by the end of 1944, organized recreational programs were being conducted in four community centers. The programs of the respective centers followed the same pattern of organization. Outdoor games included basketball, volleyball, softball, rope jumping, boxing, tumbling, track events, dodge ball, and badminton. Each of the centers except Buena Vista had outdoor lighting facilities which made it possible to have outside night programs. The indoor activities included such games as ping-pong, carrom, Chinese checkers, bunco, dominoes, bingo, and checkers. The community center records of all four centers show that each morning, afternoon, and night, hundreds of boys and girls were playing under trained Christian leadership. Had there been no community center programs these same young people would probably have been gambling, drinking, and dancing, all of which are so common in many Puerto Rican communities.

Following the closing of the community centers at Rincón, Comerío, and Buena Vista, 1946, the community recreational program concentrated more in the La Plata area. The La Plata community center was the only one which remained open after the summer of 1946. The program of recreational activities in the La Plata center were the same as in previous years. The center reports show that many organized recreational activities were conducted with a high average daily attendance. During 1946, 108 interschool and intercommunity contests were conducted under the supervision of the recreation leaders. In December, 1947, recreation leader Ellwyn Hartzler returned to the States. With no re-

Boys playing on a homemade billiard table in the slum section of a Puerto Rican town. When wholesome recreation is not provided for the idle boys, they frequently resort to gambling, smoking, and drinking.

Courtesy of Government of Puerto Rico. Photo by Delano





placement arriving to direct the recreational activities, the organized recreational program was practically discontinued.

The community-center program which at one time had been one of the strongest phases of the total program, was greatly handicapped throughout 1948, because there was no recreation leader to work with the boys. Other than a summer tournament conducted by Albert Bohrer, who was visiting in Puerto Rico, there was no organized program of recreation during the year. With no organized recreational program among the young people of the community, a contact was lost which was essential to the total program.

In January, 1949, John Brandeberry was assigned as part-time recreation leader in the community and school, and within a few months a change in attitude was noticeable among the boys.

The specific objectives of the community educational and recreational program of 1949 were stated as follows: to develop desirable principles of human conduct among the young people of the community, such as fair play, honesty, co-operation, respect for property, and ability to live, work, and play together; to assist the young people in utilizing their time in activities which are useful and educational as well as enjoyable; to promote and develop skills which may be carried over into later life and serve as a means of raising the economic status of the home. The recreational program of 1949 followed the same pattern as the center programs of previous years. Physical education classes were begun at the La Plata school, and an afternoon and night recreational program was organized for the boys and girls of the community. Competitive games were also scheduled with other communities from time to time. On Saturday nights during the summer months volleyball tournaments were organized and were well attended by boys and girls of the community. During the winter months basketball tournaments were organized for Saturday nights. A basketball league was organized among the senior high schools of the vicinity and the La Plata community team was invited to participate. Each night of the week when there was no scheduled church service the cancha was opened for supervised recreation under the leadership of Christian leaders. Twice each month educational films were shown to the people of the community. These films were on subjects of religion, agriculture, health, education, travel, science, music, and sports.

As has previously been stated, there is no objective way of evaluating a community educational and recreational program, just as there is no objective way of evaluating a school in a community. Perhaps there are those who feel that a recreational program has no place in a service program sponsored by a church agency, and they may have just reasons to support their view. The situation in Puerto Rico is different, how-



ever, from many regions. A community program must adjust to those differences if it is to be effective. In a land where there are on the average more than 600 people to the square mile, it is to be expected that hundreds of men, women, and children will have nothing to do.

When one drives through a rural Puerto Rican community where no effort has been made to provide wholesome Christian recreation, he observes men and boys grouped together around a small table or just sitting on the ground gambling in domino games, surrounded by numerous empty bottles. Each night community stores become centers of drinking, dancing, gambling, and all too frequently the evening ends in a drunken brawl. Sunday afternoons are spent at cockfights accompanied by drinking and gambling. Each day the newspapers are full of crimes growing out of centers of vice. Some may recall the early days when Mennonite work started at La Plata, when drinking, dancing, and fighting were taken for granted in the community. Today, eight years later, those things are the exception rather than the rule in the immediate La Plata vicinity. It is no longer a question whether or not a Christian group doing religious work in a densely settled community must assume a certain responsibility in providing clean, wholesome, and profitable recreation for the young people. The experiences of the past eight years have shown that a well-organized and supervised recreational program is an essential part of the total Mennonite program.

## **YOUTH SUMMER CAMPS**

Among the highlights of summer activities have been the summer youth camps. The first boys' camp was held in the summer of 1944 in the beautiful Luquillo National Forest near the famous El Yunque Peak. The camp was jointly sponsored by the Castañer, Zalduondo, and La Plata projects. It was named the "Brumbaugh Boys' Camp," since at that time the three units together were referred to as the Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit.

The camp was carefully organized months in advance of the opening date. The homes of prospective campers were visited by staff appointees and the camp objectives were explained to the boys and their parents. Boys were also given instructions concerning camp rules and regulations. The burden of financing the cost of the camp was placed upon the boys, with each one paying around \$4.00. A number of the boys at La Plata who had difficulty securing the needed money, willingly worked nearly a week in a community clean-up campaign to earn it. Most of the boys agreed that the camp experience was well worth the effort put forth in crushing the hundreds of water-filled tin cans which had accumulated behind the milk stations.



The daily camp program included morning exercises, chapel service, group discussions, one hour of work, swimming and handicraft classes, organized athletic contests, a general swim, and an evening campfire program. Special features included talks by well-known guest speakers, nature study jaunts, and an all-day hike to El Yunque. The boys had ample time to fish, hike, read, play, and get acquainted during their free time.

An effort was also made to teach the boys to improve their personal habits of living, and to guide them in forming a basic philosophy of life. The camp experience proved very worth while to most of them. Improvements were noticeable in their conduct, attitudes, personal cleanliness, tolerance, respect for authority, co-operation, and reverence.

The following three consecutive summers the boys' camps were held at Luquillo under the sponsorship of the three units. The program of activities of these years followed practically the same order as the first year. Each year around sixty or seventy boys from the three communities attended the camp.

In the summer of 1949 it was decided that there were a sufficient number of boys in the La Plata and Pulguillas communities to form a camp group. The camp was held at the McLean Conference Grounds near Bayamón with twenty-two boys attending. In the McLean camp more time was devoted to Bible study classes and more religious emphasis was given to camp life by the staff. The mornings were devoted to classes in Bible study and the afternoons were reserved for craft classes and recreational activities. The boys' camps were held at Luquillo the next two years with the same program of activities as the previous year. During these two years boys were also selected from the communities in which were located the other Mennonite mission stations, Rabanal, Palo Hincado, and Coamo Arriba. The camps were sponsored jointly by the Mennonite service and mission programs.

In the summer of 1950, a girls' camp was held for the first time, at McLean Conference Grounds. This camp was attended by girls from La Plata, Pulguillas, Rabanal, and Palo Hincado. The camp activities followed the same pattern as those of the boys' camp. The following year the girls' camp was held at Luquillo.

## **SEMINARY WORK CAMP AND SUMMER BIBLE SCHOOL**

In the summer of 1946, ten students from the Evangelical Seminary of Río Piedras spent a month at La Plata assisting in the service program

Dominoes is a favorite game among older men of Puerto Rico. In a land where there is so much leisure, recreational programs are needed among adults.

Courtesy of Government of Puerto Rico. Photo by Delano



of the unit. These ten students were divided into four groups. The groups rotated each week, making it possible for each student to get experience in the different types of work in the service program. They were assigned to various jobs, such as care of hospital patients, Bible school teaching, community recreational work, and agricultural work. The purpose of the work camp was to help young men, preparing for the ministry, to grasp the spirit of service to their fellow man and to feel that service is an actual part of the Christian ministry. Far too many young pastors come out of seminary feeling that preaching is the only responsibility of the pastor. This experience proved valuable to these young prospective ministers in that they were given opportunity to minister directly to the physical and social needs along with the spiritual needs of their fellow Puerto Ricans. The unit was also benefited by the presence of these vigorous young students who helped to inject new spiritual life into the community and unit. The students were accompanied by one of their seminary instructors, Dr. Angel Mergal. Conference periods were scheduled in which the students discussed problems with their instructor and with unit representatives.

One of the main features of the work camp was the first two-week vacation Bible school. The school was well received in the community, and the attendance was higher than anticipated. The teaching staff included unit members, seminary students, and several young people from the community. The activities of the first school were similar to those of Bible schools in the States, with scheduled periods of singing, Bible study, recreation, and crafts.

### **COMMUNITY SEWING PROJECT**

Early in 1946, Mrs. Melvin Lauver and Mrs. Harry Martens opened a sewing room in a section of the milk station of the packing house, for the purpose of teaching girls of the community, who did not have access to machines, to sew their own clothing. Classes were begun among teenage girls who came each day to learn to operate the machines. This class continued until October, during which time about forty girls had learned to operate sewing machines and sew from patterns.

One day a girl came to the sewing class and asked for some type of work whereby she might earn some money to buy clothing and food for her mother and father who were sick. She was given some stamped patches to practice on and finally she returned with a satisfactory quality of work. Other girls and women were quick to see the opportunity of

A group of women being given instructions in sewing.

*Courtesy El Mundo*



earning money with the needle, and within a short time they were submitting samples of their sewing.

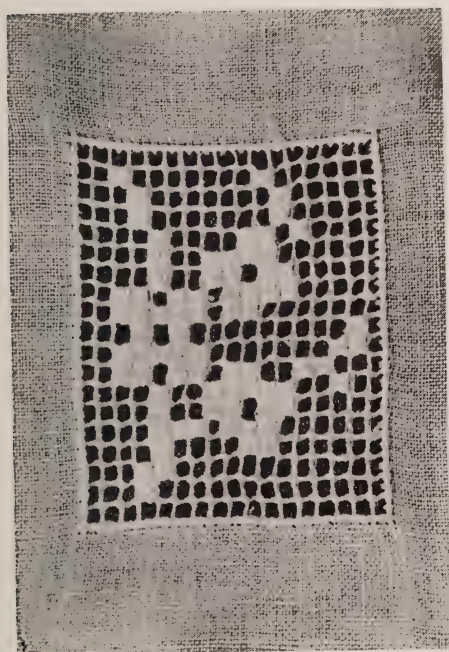
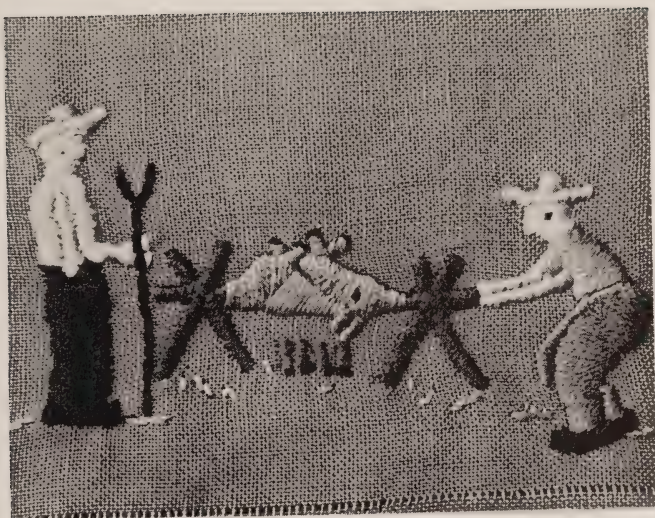
The beginning of a project of this type was not without its problems. Those who needed work most were not always the most skilled with the needle, which meant that some could not be accepted though they were needy women. Many of the needlework skills had been lost, since so many of the younger women had given up sewing years ago to work in the tobacco fields and packing houses. The sewing supervisors therefore had to search through the hills to find older women who still remembered the needlework skills. The supervisors learned the art from these women and then taught it to those desiring work. The sewing project was begun as a result of the strong conviction on the part of some of the unit personnel that a depressed and poverty-stricken people must be given opportunity to help solve their own economic problems, rather than be given direct relief supplies in food and clothing.

A number of women took readily to the needlecraft and before the end of 1947, the sewing project had developed into a small industry giving employment to about forty-five women. Each week they came to the sewing room to receive their designs, instructions, and materials, and brought in their finished work. This work was carefully inspected and if it was accepted the women were paid for it. The unit supervisors estimated the time needed for each design and then determined how much money should be allowed. After a few years, Puerto Rican labor laws specified certain rates to be paid for each design. When the work was brought in it usually showed marks of uncleanness, and therefore had to be laundered and ironed before it was placed on sale. Most of the needlework was marketed in the States among Mennonite people, though some was sold in Puerto Rico, especially to continental people residing here.

As the project grew, new women were employed, and new designs were added. The women soon learned to do nearly all the types of needlework commonly done in Puerto Rican needlecraft. The examinations given the ladies before accepting them, and the fact that their work was not accepted unless it was of high quality, helped the women to develop their skill. The first piece of work was usually kept to show each woman from time to time how much she was improving.

The fellowship which the women enjoyed each week with the unit supervisors was valuable to them in their daily living. They had opportunity to observe Christian principles demonstrated in business relations. The women formed a confidential friendship with the supervisors who stood ready to advise on social and spiritual problems. Each woman felt herself a part of a Christian organization which showed an interest in her physical and spiritual welfare.





These sewing designs illustrate the three stitches used by Puerto Rican women.

During the two-year period of 1946 and 1947, the women received \$8,350 in wages. What this added income meant to the poor rural homes need not be discussed. The sewing project perhaps more than any other phase of the total program, achieved one of the basic objectives; namely, to help the rural people help themselves in raising their own economic status. If a Christian witness is to be effective among an exploited, depressed people, their physical and economic needs cannot be ignored.

What is more interesting than the actual sewing itself is the people who do it. How one wishes that the persons in the States who adorn their homes with the beautiful handwork might visit each home in which the work is done. A brief description of a few of the workers will help the reader understand better what the sewing project has meant to many homes.

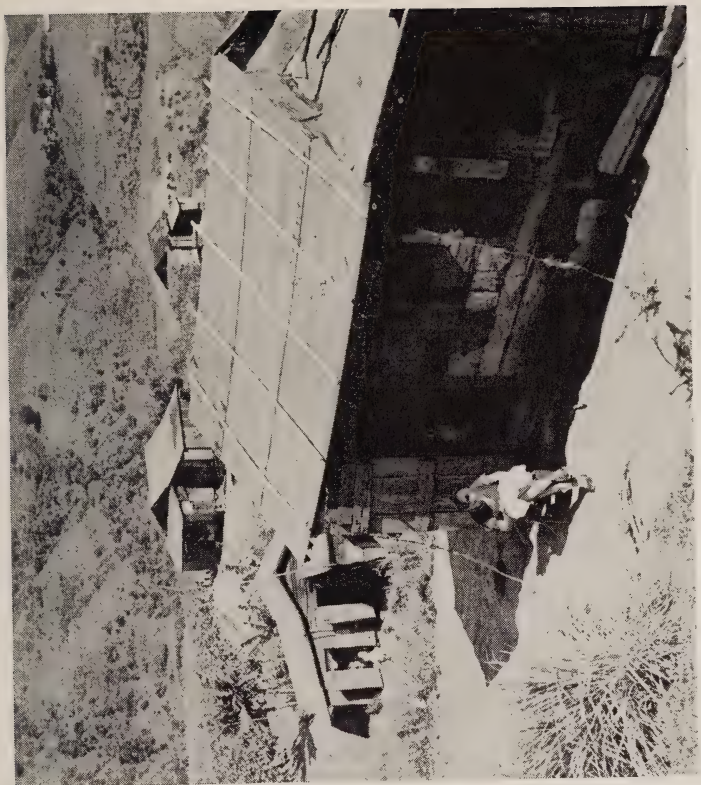
"Juana is a happy Christian. Before her twelve-year-old son Samuel became a Christian and led her to Christ, she was unable to smile. Going glumly about her work, she seemed to think of nothing except her unhappy home life. But now she smiles, for she is confident that God will hear her prayers for the salvation of her husband. . . . She attends every church service: Tuesday night, Friday night, Saturday morning prayer meeting at 5:00, women's meeting on Saturday afternoon, and church twice on Sunday.

"Emilia lives in a little one-room granary. We walked into her home one day to see her new two-burner oil stove which she had bought to replace the old charcoal box. I could not help wishing that the women who had bought her work could share her joy in her new stove—paid for completely with income from the sewing project.

"Down close to the river we stopped to visit Margada as she sat in the doorway of her hut doing hemstitching. However, she was tearing out stitches instead of putting them in. Poor Margada had picked up her work to sew in odd minutes and had the hems of two sides turned opposite from the others! I could almost feel the ache myself as she said she liked hemstitching, but it made the back of her neck sore. Her work means food and clothing for her children, one of whom had just been in the hospital for treatment of severe malnutrition. The father tries to work, but is almost constantly under the influence of drink. The next time you admire your lovely linens, think of how you have helped Margada and her children.

"Pura and her sister Carmen Ana live in a nice frame house on top of the hill where they can look out over the valley. They sew cross-stitch and hand-drawn work to pay for their high-school expenses. All the money which is not needed for this, goes to their father for the needs of the family. Pura graduated from senior high school last year among the ten highest of her class and secured a university scholarship for this





Puerto Rican women at home, engaged in their work of embroidering linens.





school year. She has entered the University of Puerto Rico to prepare for teaching school. Without the income from sewing she could hardly have finished high school.

"Adina is the mother of ten children. She was one of the first women to start sewing. She sews satin-stitch native scenes. Her husband is without work most of the time. Several of the older children have jobs which increase the income somewhat. She has just recently accepted Christ and she and her husband plan to be legally married in the near future."

These are the women who have been making the beautiful linens being marketed by the La Plata Mennonite Project. Persons who buy these products can feel that their purchase is more than a purchase, it is a contribution to a needy home. More women could be given work in the sewing project but present demand permits the employment of only thirty.

## **COMMUNITY NUTRITION WORK**

Malnutrition has been one of the basic causes of the health condition of many of the Puerto Rican people. Though in more recent years there have been fewer extreme cases of malnourished children, yet there are hundreds of rural Puerto Rican people who do not have an adequate diet. The susceptibility to disease is probably often due to the fact that body resistance is low as a result of improper diet. There are some basic factors that must be overcome in solving the nutrition problem. The fact that many rural Puerto Rican people exist on a rice and beans diet is due to several things. First, the economic situation of many will hardly permit them to supplement the rice and beans with other protein foods. Second, many of the people are ignorant as to the value of certain foods and are not conscious that they are eating themselves to death. Third, many of the people are complacent in their present situation and are willing to just exist rather than to put forth an effort to improve their diet. They like the rice and beans, so why bother to supplement them with eggs, meat, milk, fruits, and vegetables? These same three factors are present in attempting to solve almost any other problem in rural Puerto Rico. Cognizance that nutrition is basic to health gave rise to the beginning of the community nutrition program by Pearl Kauffmann in April, 1949. A small cottage previously used as living quarters was set aside as a nutrition practice house.

The objectives of the nutrition program were: to help bring happiness to people of the community by decreasing the incidence of malnutrition and thereby improving physical health; to develop an understanding of the relationship of foods to health, and the relationship

of physical, moral, mental, and spiritual health; to assist in raising the economic status of the home through a knowledge of raising, preserving, and purchasing of foods.

Some of the methods used in achieving these goals were rather indirect. Preliminary work frequently included visiting homes of malnourished children who were discharged from the hospital in an improved condition. Home conditions and economic status enabled the nutrition worker to determine the underlying factors which led to malnutrition. The unsanitary condition of the home was sometimes found to be the basic cause. The child was often so infested with parasites that it was impossible for the body to receive any benefit from the food eaten. In some cases the child had had no milk from the time it was a few months old. Its diet frequently consisted of rice water or a tea of herbs. It was not unusual to admit a child to the hospital who knew nothing about eating. After a few days of patient teaching, during which time the food created a pleasant and satisfying taste sensation, the problem changed from force feeding to one of being able to satisfy the child. In the course of a few weeks his attitudes and disposition changed from sadness, indifference, and anger, to happiness, eagerness, and satisfaction.

When the child was discharged from the hospital, all the possible information on him was secured from the parents and from his hospital records. In a few weeks the home was visited and the information was compared with the evidence. Occasionally the child was found to be in a similar condition as when admitted to the hospital. When this was the case the family had usually ignored feeding instructions or was financially unable to follow orders. The job of the nutrition worker was to try to convince the parents that with some effort on their part the child could maintain its improved condition and continue to grow. Feeding instructions had to be repeated along with additional suggestions for securing food.

The practice house was furnished with improvised equipment such as a concrete charcoal stove with a smoke escape, a dining table, and shelves constructed from old lumber. The purpose of using improvised equipment, which cost a sum total of \$9.31, was to encourage the people to improve their homes with simple, inexpensive furnishings. Experimental meals with native Puerto Rican foods were served to unit members and local people from time to time to serve as a demonstration of how economically Puerto Ricans might prepare nutritive meals with their own food.

Another interesting part of the nutrition program was the feeding experiment conducted with white rats to show the inadequacy of the typical rural rice and beans diet. Rats fed on a rice and beans diet sup-

plemented with proteins doubled the weight of the rats fed only rice and beans, in a period of eight weeks. Other experiments were conducted with rats to show how the lack of certain other foods affected growth and development. These experiments were used to illustrate in a graphic manner the importance of a balanced diet for proper growth. In November, 1949, a three-hour course was begun with the hospital aides in which they studied the composition and value of foods. This class continued for a six-month period. The community nutrition program had to be discontinued August, 1950, when Miss Kauffmann returned to the States, since no trained nutrition worker was available to continue the work.

### **LA PLATA CRAFT PROGRAM**

When the first workers arrived in Puerto Rico in 1943, one of the first things that impressed them was the large number of relief projects in operation. As one traveled from town to town he noticed groups of men working on road construction under the administration of such relief agencies as WPA, PEG, etc. He was frequently made to wonder what would happen in Puerto Rico when these would be discontinued. Fortunately these projects were discontinued during the war when many homes were benefiting from soldier-sons' salaries. When the war closed many families were cut off from one of their chief sources of income as their sons were released from military service.

In 1948, Luís Muñoz Marín was elected Governor of Puerto Rico. He continued an extensive program of industrializing Puerto Rico by inviting continental industries to the Island and granting them tax exemption for a period of ten years. Many small industries were quick to begin operation in Puerto Rico in order to utilize the surplus labor which was ever present. As one visits the various rural homes in Puerto Rico today, he observes something which was not seen half a decade ago. He notices many members of the families engaged in handwork in the homes.

In January, 1949, the A. S. Beck Shoe Corporation, through its representative Herbert Lee, invited the La Plata Mennonite Project to assist them in promoting a sandal-weaving project in the La Plata community. The sandal project was begun the following month under the direction of Maynard Good in co-operation with the public-school craft teacher who trained four girls in the community to weave the sandal uppers. These four girls were used in training others and within six months around 100 persons from the La Plata, Rabanal, and Palo Hincado communities had learned the art of sandal weaving. The uppers were made from leather or plastic stripping. As they were completed in the



homes they were delivered to the craft supervisor who inspected each piece of work. They were then packed for shipment to the Beck factory in the States where the sandal was completed and placed on the market. Later handbag inserts were made from the same kinds of material and finally completed in the Beck factories.

The weavers were paid forty cents per pair for the sandal work and a good weaver could complete five or six pairs each day. During the year 1950, with the materials arriving at irregular intervals, 15,378 pairs of sandals and 4,429 handbag inserts were woven. A total of \$5,818.00 was paid out in wages by the Beck Company. In some families this was the only source of income while in others it was used to supplement other income. One of the biggest problems of the project was the irregularity of arrival of materials making it impossible to give regular employment to the workers.

Another important part of the craft program was the woodworking division of the shop in which beautiful bamboo and mahogany lamps were made. The mahogany base and bamboo stem were made in the craft shop and the sabután shades were purchased from a San Juan firm. The lamps became a good item for tourist trade since they could be shipped conveniently. In addition to the lamps the woodwork division also made maps, plaques, picture belts, and photo albums. Three boys were given employment in the woodwork and by the end of 1950, over \$700.00 worth of craft products had been sold.

## **CO-OPERATIVE EFFORTS OF SECOND UNIT SCHOOL AND MENNONITE PROJECT**

During the school year of 1949-1950, the Insular Department of Education began a study to promote closer co-operation and understanding between the public schools and their communities. The La Plata public school was chosen as one of the schools for this study because the community service division of the La Plata Mennonite Project had previously worked closely with the school in promoting community improvement.

An organization was set up in the school consisting of various committees to study the respective community problems. The committees were made up of faculty members along with unit personnel engaged in community service. During the following school year a committee composed of Department of Education officials and half a dozen superintendents of schools met in conference at La Plata to study in detail the work of the past year. The unit director gave a report of the history and service of the La Plata Mennonite Project to this group of school officials.

A plan of co-operation was drawn up in February in which the unit offered its co-operation in certain areas of community service. The school was invited to help in the composing and printing of the community paper, *El Heraldito de La Plata*. Several teachers were appointed to the paper staff and each issue contained several pages devoted to school activities. The continuation of the school recreational and physical education program under the unit recreation leader was promised. Following this agreement the school and unit recreational department worked together more closely in the total plan for community recreation. The program of educational films was also extended into the school. The school was invited to sponsor educational programs for the community center, thus utilizing the center facilities in providing worth-while entertainment for the community. The unit agriculture director pledged co-operation with the school agriculture teacher in working on community agricultural problems. School classes were invited to visit the hospital and clinic from time to time in an effort to make the children more health conscious and to secure information on health problems. The assistance of hospital personnel was volunteered where they might be of help in giving health demonstrations or talks to school groups. The sanitation worker solicited the help of the school if and when a sanitation survey is made of the La Plata community.

The longer the service program operated in Puerto Rico the more apparent it became that the success of the program depended on the co-operation with existing agencies. A service program which seeks to get to the basic problems of the community cannot operate in isolation, nor exclude itself from other organizations with similar objectives.

## Agricultural and other Services

### COMMUNITY AGRICULTURAL SERVICE

The economic situation of rural Puerto Rico made it imperative that a service program offer help to the people in teaching them how to better utilize their agricultural resources. One of the sources of Puerto Rico's economic problem has been the system of land tenure in which most of the land was in the hands of a few wealthy landlords and the large majority of the rural population lived as serfs on large estates. Much of the land has been devoted to the production of export crops, whereas more than 95 per cent of the food consumed by the people has been imported.

The situation at La Plata has not been typical of rural Puerto Rico, since a large number of families have had their own little farms of four or five acres, under PRRA ownership, but in recent years without PRRA assistance in technical information and marketing. The majority of these farmers have put their small plots of ground in sugar cane or tobacco culture, not so much because they wanted to produce sugar and tobacco as that they did not have the necessary assistance in growing and marketing food crops. Without this assistance these farmers may degenerate to a standard of living below that of their serf neighbors, unless they resort to growing sugar and tobacco. This situation presents a real challenge to the Mennonite Church, which has always been composed of conservative people interested in agriculture as well as a people who teach against the use of tobacco and rum. Much of the land in La Plata has been badly depleted and still shows signs of wholesale soil exploitation by big American tobacco interests.

In view of this situation the La Plata Mennonite Project has been sponsoring an agricultural program with the definite objective of helping promote a solid agricultural economy among the small farmers of the valley. First, emphasis has been placed upon the importance of agriculture and the dignity of manual labor. The common concept among rural Puerto Ricans has been that manual farm labor is a jíbaro occupation, not engaged in by persons of dignity and culture. It will probably





take years to break down this firmly rooted concept, but little by little the Christian attitude, that there is nothing undignified nor disrespectful about manual labor as a means of earning a livelihood, is beginning to take root.

Second, the agricultural program has encouraged the cultivation of family gardens to supplement the meager diet of rice and beans. Most of the people have small plots of land suitable for garden plots, but they need to be shown the potentialities of a garden as a means of supplementing the family food supply.

Third, the agricultural program has encouraged better tillage and farm management practices, such as proper fertilization, utilization of farm manures, drainage and erosion control, and the sowing of improved varieties of seeds. The central service farm served as a valuable laboratory in teaching the best methods and in demonstrating the most successful procedures to the community.

Fourth, experimentation has been conducted to find food crops which could be grown profitably to replace the strictly cash crops of sugar cane and tobacco. Neither of these two crops has met the food needs of the Puerto Rican people. The extensive production of them has rather served to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. In order to discourage the growing of tobacco by the Puerto Rican Christians it became an obligation to discover food crops that could be substituted. Experimental work has been done on the central service farm with such crops as pineapples, tropical kudzu, velvet beans, strawberries, and sorghum. As new crops have been found to be profitable, they were encouraged among the local farmers.

Fifth, the agricultural program has endeavored to improve the livestock in the community. It has already been demonstrated that the American chicks will grow much faster than the small native Puerto Rican chicks. Some of the small farmers have shown a keen interest in developing their poultry further to where they have raised their own hens for egg production. Other efforts have been made to improve animal breeds in the community through the importation of good breeds of dairy cattle and goats.

Sixth, the agricultural program has helped the local farmers find a market for their produce. The problem of marketing agricultural produce has been an acute one because of the lack of efficient distribution facilities. The small grower has found himself at a considerable disadvantage when trying to compete with larger producers on the city

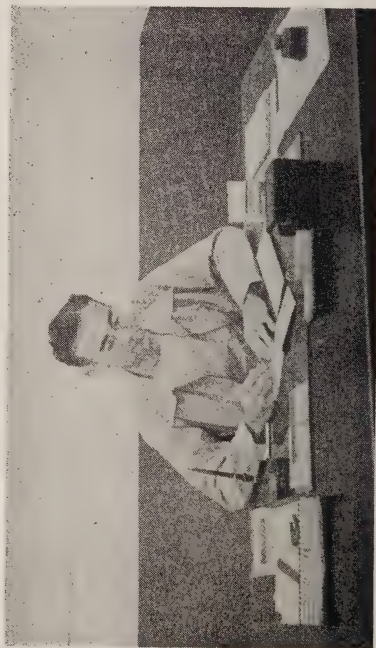
Cultivating a field of bananas on the La Plata central service farm during the days of PRRA administration. The steepness of the land still makes use of modern machinery impractical in the interior mountain regions.

Courtesy of PRRA





Participants in the sandal-weaving project receive instructions.



Justus G. Holsinger, director of the Mennonite service project.



Cows grazing on native Kadzu pasture.



Production of milk for hospital and unit use is an essential part of the program.



markets. Though no marketing association has yet been organized, the La Plata project tries to help the local farmers find an outlet for their food products.

It is interesting to notice the progress and development of the agricultural program from its small beginning in 1943 to the present time. In 1943, the agricultural service was a part of the community building (service) program. The transfer of the unit agronomist to the hospital as full-time clinic secretary greatly handicapped the development of agricultural service. The 4-H club, however, was continued under the leadership of the unit agronomist, and at the end of 1945, the La Plata club was rated first among the clubs of the district. Unit loans were made to club members to assist them in starting worth-while agricultural projects.

Because of a personnel shortage the unit garden was discontinued and unit vegetables were purchased from an army grower located near Aibonito. There was a growing conviction that the unit should maintain its own garden to supply fresh vegetables for unit and hospital use, and to serve as an example to the people of the community. The proposal for a garden was placed before the unit staff September, 1944, but was tabled until a man could be released from construction work to take care of it. The construction work seemingly did not decrease as expected and the planned garden was slow in getting started. The plan to supply meat for the kitchen had its origin in January, 1944, in the purchase of a pig to eat the unit garbage. The pig was named MCC and his chief assignment was to feed the unit workers. The objective was achieved in May, when a 150-pound hog became pork.

New life was injected into the agricultural programs of the La Plata and Castañer units when the Brethren Service Committee sent a shipment of heifers to Puerto Rico in the spring of 1945. A. M. de Andino stated that before the heifers could be consigned to the respective units and communities a qualified unit member would need to be assigned to give the animals proper care. Carl Epp left the hospital desk and began to devote full time to agriculture.

The shipment of heifers arrived in Puerto Rico, May 26, 1945. They were young purebred stock raised by Brethren farmers in the States and donated to the Brethren Service Committee for relief needs. Twenty-five of the fifty animals were turned over to the Farm Security Administration for distribution and twenty-five were distributed by PRRA at La Plata and Castañer. Of these twenty-five, La Plata resettlers received eleven heifers and the La Plata unit received six heifers and one bull which was used for community use. The animals were distributed to resettlers who gave evidence that they were able to care for them properly, and who could pay the \$75.00 shipping charge per animal. The

heifers were presented to the resettlers at an impressive ceremony in charge of Andino.

By the end of 1945, four of the heifers had freshened and produced a total of 9,667 pounds of milk valued at \$580.00. Valuable service was also rendered the community in treating injuries and infections of farm animals. During the year eight hogs were raised for unit use.

In January, 1946, Director Martens announced the intention of expanding the agricultural program. Plans were laid to expand along the lines of dairy service, poultry, hog production, gardening, artificial insemination, and 4-H club work. Two CPS men were assigned to carry forward the proposed program. The farm production reports at the end of 1946 indicated that a rather extensive program had developed during the year. A six-cow herd produced 24,331 pounds of milk; fifty hens, which started producing in March, laid 228 dozen eggs; ten hogs were slaughtered for unit consumption; and a rabbit project was begun. The unit garden yielded an abundance of vegetables for unit and hospital use. Fruit trees were started with the intention of eventually producing tropical fruits.

Statistics are not available to show the total farm production in 1947. With more farm land made available by PRRA, more emphasis was placed on experimentation with tropical legumes for soil improvement and for use as a pasture crop to increase milk production. The gift of the Toggenburg goats was the nucleus for the beginning of the goat project.

During 1948 and 1949, the agricultural program became one of the three major types of service rendered to the community by the unit. The run-down condition of the farm when purchased in 1948 necessitated several years of soil rebuilding, fencing, and constructing of animal barns before the farm could be operated on a profit basis. Farm expenses still exceed the farm income, but many of the expenses have been for farm improvements. During 1948-49, about 3,000 young pineapple plants were planted as a source of food for the unit and hospital and as a possible food crop to be encouraged in the community.

Tropical kudzu was planted on the hillsides for the purpose of producing a better pasture for dairy cattle. The results have been encouraging and the small farmers are therefore urged to plant it so as to increase the milk production of their cows. Seed was harvested from the crop and sold to encourage the planting of kudzu.

During the year of 1948, \$4,219.37 worth of food was produced on the farm for unit and hospital use. The following years \$4,765.96 worth of

The director of agriculture sells fifteen-day-old chicks to a young La Plata farmer.

*Courtesy El Mundo*





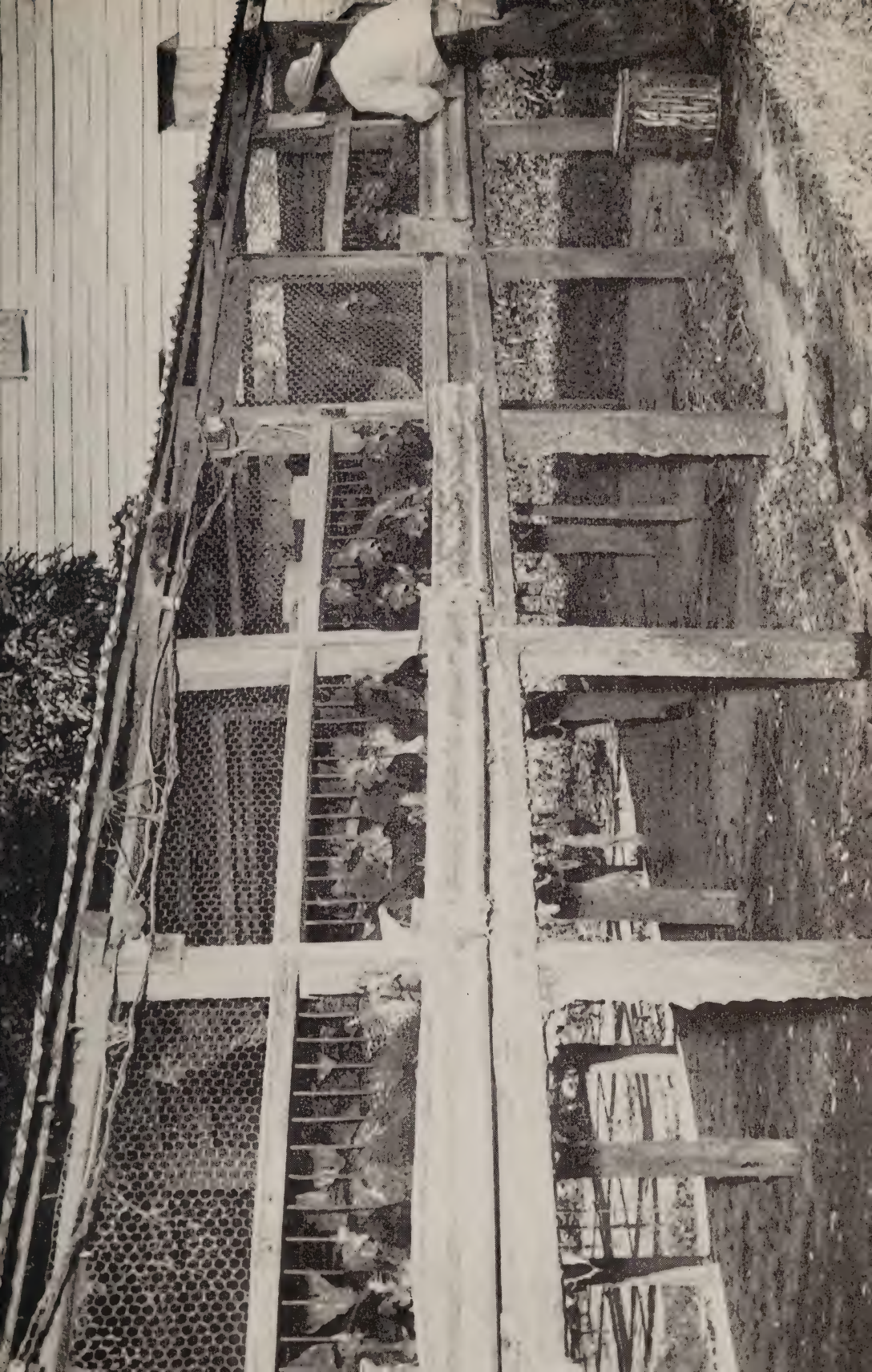
food was consumed from the farm and \$1,877.38 was sold on the market. Had this same food been purchased on the Puerto Rican market the cost of unit and hospital operation would have increased considerably.

The report from the poultry project indicates that it was one of the most successful parts of the farm program of 1949. An average of 113 hens, which began production around June, produced 2,354 dozen eggs. A demonstration flock of 100 hens culled down to fifty by the end of the year laid 1,068 dozen eggs during a seven and one-half month period. During the last six months of the year 2,800 baby chicks were imported from Virginia and resold as two-week-old chicks to the small farmers on a nonprofit basis. Most of these were sold in groups of twenty-five or fifty, depending on the facilities of the farmer. Feed was also sold on a nonprofit basis and assistance was given in marketing. The average profit realized by the small growers was forty cents per bird or a total of \$1,120 to the community.

The farm production reports for the year of 1950 show an increase in production for certain farm commodities. During the year approximately 4,000 baby chicks were purchased, brooded, and resold as fifteen-day-old chicks in groups of twenty-five to fifty. Approximately \$2,300.00 worth of feed was sold to the growers, on a credit basis when necessary, with the agreement that the accounts be repaid in full when the broilers were sold. Necessary assistance was given in building coops, as well as advice and assistance in feeding, sanitation, marketing, and other phases of poultry management. The demonstration flock of 200 New Hampshire hens produced 36,117 eggs in spite of an epidemic of bronchitis. Equipment and buildings were constructed in a simple economic manner, in line with the purpose of a practical demonstration.

Farm brood sows were kept to supply meat for hospital and unit use and to provide weaning pigs for the community. The agriculture workers vaccinated a number of hogs in the community against cholera. During the year new sanitary hog houses were constructed to comfortably house the sows and their litters. The unit garden continued to produce beans, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, cabbage, lettuce, etc., for unit use and also for market. Three acres of bananas and plátanos were planted during the year. Tropical kudzu was continued as a source of high protein pasture, and seed was again offered for sale to local farmers at cost, to encourage them in improving their pasture. Velvet beans were grown as a green manure crop to demonstrate their value in increasing soil fertility.

The central service farm at La Plata keeps a demonstration flock of hens in order to show proper methods of care as well as to produce the necessary eggs for hospital and unit use.





A small farm-service office was maintained where local farmers purchased chicks and pigs, and feed for poultry, hogs, and other animals. Medicines for livestock, insecticides, fertilizer, farm equipment, and other items which were difficult to obtain elsewhere were made available to the community. This office also served as a source of technical information on agriculture, and as a clearing agency to help market agricultural products. All business was handled on a nonprofit basis.

In addition to his other duties, the agriculture director was leader of the 4-H club. The boys were given advice and necessary assistance in developing their projects which included gardens, cattle, goats, pigs, and poultry.

## **MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION SERVICE**

The lifeblood of the service unit operating in a tropical region under wartime conditions was the maintenance and construction department which consisted of the laundry, kitchen, construction, mechanical repair work, and office. Without efficient and capable workers in this phase of the program the total service to the community would have been greatly handicapped. The unit construction crew of 1944-45, headed by Ervin Warkentin, worked side by side with the PRRA workers in performing the construction necessary to the success of the total program. An old warehouse building had been completely renovated into a modest but serviceable hospital building by the date of the hospital dedication in 1944. This work involved the installation of partitions, utility cabinets, closets, sinks, electrical installations, tile floors, etc. In addition to the remodeling of the main hospital structure, an annex was constructed to house the unit dining room and kitchen, and the men's ward. A dormitory building 30 by 70 feet was constructed to house unit personnel. Because of the difficulty in securing new materials, hardly a foot of new lumber was used in the entire construction program. Almost all of the materials were secured from the dismantling of old PRRA buildings. One could hardly believe that a small serviceable rural hospital could have been constructed from the coarse rough materials that were used.

Other major construction projects completed during the two-year period of 1944-45, were a kitchen-hospital storeroom, a garage addition, a concrete dwelling house 24 by 40 feet for the doctor's family, and the remodeling of a horse barn into a dairy. The unit chapel was also begun in the fall of 1945 and completed the following spring. Hundreds of unit man-hours went into the construction of these buildings, so essential to the total program. In addition to these major projects at La Plata, the construction men also made alterations in the houses for unit personnel at Buena Vista and Comerío. They also devoted much time to



the construction of furniture such as dining-room tables, beds, cabinets, bedside stands, tray carts, operating-room cart, dressing tables, etc.

The contribution made by these men was more than a material contribution. In working side by side with Puerto Ricans they formed a cordial friendship which assisted in promoting good relations within the community. They left a spiritual witness among the men with whom they worked by the wholesome attitude with which they performed their jobs, in spite of the numerous problems such as shortage of materials and the lack of proper tools so necessary in doing a good job.

The major construction project of 1946-47 was the construction of a parsonage to house the pastor and his family. Because of the shortage of funds to hire Puerto Rican labor, much of the work had to be done by unit personnel. This meant that some of the unit workers had to be taken from their regular service assignment to aid in construction. Some of the services of the unit were suspended until the completion of the house. When the concrete seven-room house and garage were completed, many considered it a milestone accomplishment since it provided adequate housing for the missionary family and also provided another hurricane-proof house.

During the same two-year period the new operating room, front porch, and ventilators were added to the hospital building. Other construction projects completed were the construction of a sanitation shed, and the dismantling and moving of two squatter houses.

At La Plata there were always odd jobs to be done. Someone had to be on hand to repair tires, fenders, broken springs, leaking faucets, electrical appliances, and numerous other mechanical devices. In addition to these jobs, housewives and farmers in the community kept the shop well supplied with charcoal irons, sewing machines, umbrellas, plows and hoes, all needing repairs. The life of the shop men is well pictured in the following description:

"But it [shop] is an interesting place to work, although it does have its problems. The day is usually different from what we had planned. After unlocking and opening for 'business' after breakfast, I look at the little book and see it's time to grease and check the truck; so I begin. Then Clayton Gingerich comes in and announces, 'The pickup has a flat and I have to go to Matón so. . . .' There, that's done—now we'll get at that truck again because they'll need it in the morning to make their weekly shopping trip to San Juan. Everything is going fine now, and I've had just enough time to get real dirty and greasy—who's this coming in white uniform? Oh, it's a nurse. She says, 'The electricity in the hospital just went off, and do you have time to fix it? We're running the sterilizer now.' Here we find a blown fuse, which is quickly replaced.

"Now back to the truck. Oh, there's the dinner bell. Where has the

morning gone? Maybe after dinner we can get something done. But here, again, I made a mistake by sitting beside 'Pop' at dinner. He promptly proceeds to tell me one of the wheelbarrows they are using for the cement on the new house broke and they need it badly, so would I find time right after dinner. . . .

"Now for another try at the truck. There it is almost . . . but look at that broken spring leaf! These rough roads! 'Oh, buenas tardes, muchacho.' He wants to sweep the shop for a little scrap lumber to use as firewood. Well, it sure needs it, so he gets the go-ahead signal. But, of course, that takes a little supervision.

"Now let's see if we can finish that truck. Yes, here is an old spring leaf that might work. There she is, but it's nearly time for supper. . . ."

When the La Plata property was taken over from PRRA in 1948, many of the buildings were badly in need of repair. To put the property in condition involved added cost. More and more, married couples were replacing single workers, requiring additional housing to provide adequate living quarters. The MCC and Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities entered an agreement that each would assume 50 per cent of a total property improvement cost of \$5,000.

The program of property improvement was carried out during the years of 1948 and 1949 by the MCC unit construction man assisted by Puerto Rican workers. The property improvement program included the complete interior and exterior painting of the hospital along with the construction of additional cabinets, and shelves, and replacements of rotted woodwork; exterior painting of the big dormitory; exterior and interior painting of the director's house; interior and exterior painting of Leelo Cottage; remodeling of Casa Grande to house four married couples; interior and exterior painting of the bunkhouse; dismantling of a tobacco barn; erection of over 1,200 rods of concrete-post fence and numerous other small construction projects such as construction of a concrete garbage-disposal unit and a kitchen ventilator. Three living-quarter cottages were also constructed by MCC labor with the Mission Board bearing the cost of the materials. Two of these cottages were occupied by unit personnel while the other was occupied by mission personnel. Following this program of property improvement the project presented a much better appearance and workers were living under more convenient living arrangements than at any other time in the history of the program. Each married couple was provided with a two-room apartment or a small two-room cottage with bath.

The only major construction completed during 1950 and the first half of 1951, was the remodeling of Leelo Cottage as permanent living quarters for the Snyder family and the construction of a three-room concrete hurricane-proof addition to the Birky house, making it perman-

ent living quarters for the Birky family. A small building was constructed to house the new steam unit for the laundry.

In June, 1951, two 4-E men arrived to help in the total future construction program of the mission and service programs. This new construction program was placed under the supervision of Henry Zehr, in the absence of Elmer Springer who returned to the States for his six-month furlough. The first assignment of the construction crew was the building of the school building at Pulguillas.

All of the problems of feeding twenty or thirty hospital patients and around forty-five hungry workers could not be, and were not, recorded in the annals of the La Plata project. Few will ever know the strain and stress of trying to prepare adequate meals for workers and patients in the early days of the project, battling against such problems as island food shortages, the squeezing of food costs into an established budget already overburdened with the increasing program, and the lack of a fresh, sanitary meat and milk supply. Perhaps few appreciate the hours spent over the hot stoves in preparing meals. In spite of these problems the kitchen workers went about their daily jobs with a wholesome Christian attitude, feeling that their work was a vital part of the total Christian witness. During the first two years of operation, the kitchen was staffed almost wholly by continental CPS workers, under the supervision of Naomi Shank, the dietitian. Little by little, the continental workers were replaced by Puerto Rican workers until finally after about four years the kitchen was completely staffed with Puerto Rican workers, serving under the supervision of the dietitian. Each year the kitchen served around 53,000 meals, of which more than 15,000 were to hospital patients. The average cost of foodstuff per meal usually ran around twenty-four cents.

The laundry is another phase of maintenance service, so essential to the success of the total program, whose problems and difficulties remained unrecorded. It was soon learned that a home washing machine could not endure the strain of laundering all the unit clothing. A used commercial machine was added to the laundry, making it possible to take care of the added load of laundry when the hospital was opened. Perhaps few appreciated fully the hours spent hanging clothes, ironing uniforms, and searching for names on clothing. Laundry equipment was difficult to secure during the war. He who could locate a new electric iron for sale on the island was indeed fortunate. Some of the equipment was secondhand and in normal times would have been discarded. In spite of these difficulties the laundry performed an efficient service to the hospital and unit. Each year the laundry took care of more than 60,000 pounds of clothing. From time to time new kitchen and laundry equipment was added as needed and as the budget permitted.





A report of this nature can in no way give due credit to all those who labored over the hot stoves, under the blistering sun wheeling concrete to the top of a house, or in other forms of strenuous labor. Whatever the type of work performed, of one thing the workers were conscious—that all were working together to minister to the human needs of the people, “In the Name of Christ.” It mattered little whether they were nurses, carpenters, cooks, doctors, laundrymen, teachers, mechanics, hospital attendants, or recreation leaders—all worked together in a common cause.

### MORTUARY SERVICE

Robert Ehret, a graduate mortician, joined the unit in August, 1944, with the general understanding that he would have opportunity to utilize his training as a member of the La Plata Mennonite unit. The unit staff in September, 1944, agreed that he should be permitted to go ahead with his plan to provide embalming service in the neighboring towns of Aibonito and Cayey, to the extent that it did not interfere with his other duties as hospital attendant. It was also decided that a \$25 charge should be made for each burial. Ehret therefore worked at his mortuary business aside from his hospital assignment, and it was thus not regarded as an official part of the unit program until in April, 1945, when the question came up for clarification. At the April staff meeting it was decided that Ehret be permitted to go ahead on his embalming program with three things to be worked out with the unit director; namely, a place for work, a work schedule, and a financial arrangement. It was generally agreed that embalming service should be an actual part of the total program, since it rendered a much-needed service. It also offered opportunity to get close to the people by ministering to them in a time of distress, and in helping to bring them in closer touch with the Christian faith by providing a Christian burial for their loved ones.

An arrangement was officially worked out and became effective July 1, 1945, whereby embalming service became an actual part of the total MCC program. The cost of financing the work and the income from it were included within the budget of the unit. By the end of 1945, no less than forty-eight funerals were conducted. At some of the funerals unit members participated in the service with special music. This service remained a part of the total program until 1946 when Ehret was released from CPS and started his own business in the town of Aibonito. In a few years his funeral establishment became one of the leading ones on the island.

The efficiency and competence of the kitchen staff aid greatly in keeping the hospital patients and unit members contented.

*Courtesy El Mundo*

## Reminiscences of La Plata

This chapter relates some of the many experiences of the workers aside from their regular line of work. Some of these descriptions express sorrow and pity, some happiness, and some more or less the routine social life of the group. Altogether they form a picture of what a group of service workers experienced as they lived and worked together, surrounded by many human needs.

These events were among those recorded in the *Río La Plata*, the official monthly newsletter of the unit since its beginning in 1943. The *Río La Plata* received its name from the beautiful La Plata (Silver) River which winds its way through mountainous terrain. The La Plata Menonite project is located in its valley. Between the river and the project is located a small cone-shaped hill, which is the first thing one sees when entering the valley from either direction. One of the unit members composed a beautiful little poem entitled: "To a Hill—La Loma."

On thy sides man long has roamed,  
And built thereon his humble home,  
On thy top the brave have stood,  
And seen the visions that they could.  
From thy soil the common man,  
Has raised his needed food by hand.  
At thy feet where streams have flown,  
Man his water's supply has drawn.  
Oh, eternal temple of the soil,  
Thou hast seen man's play and toil;  
Thou hast seen much in thy time;  
Teach us now thy truths sublime.  
Tell us of thy beauty, strength,  
Tell us all from start to length.  
Who hath given thee great powers,  
The strength of rocks, beauty of flowers?  
Who hath authorized thy start?  
Who hath made thee what thou art?

—A. E. B.



## EXPERIENCES OF 1944-45

*Christmas in the Tropics.* The holiday season festivities at the La Plata project were somewhat of a mixture of American and Puerto Rican customs. The community center was decorated according to American custom and on Christmas Eve the young people of the community gathered around the Christmas tree in the center to sing both Spanish and English carols. This was the first time that many of the young people had ever heard the Christmas carols which are so much a part of the Christmas activities in the States. After singing together in the center, the group organized into a caroling party and went from house to house, singing the carols to each family of the community. The singing was well received by each home and the Christmas caroling has become an annual festivity of the Christmas season.

The Puerto Rican holiday celebrations follow more closely the Spanish traditions, and their chief day of the holiday season is "Three Kings' Day" which is January 6. It is difficult for the Puerto Rican children, who live in a land of sunshine and palms, to visualize the American concept of Christmas. Their gift exchange takes place on Three King's Day rather than on Christmas day. In the late afternoon of January 5, one can see the Puerto Rican children out in the fields gathering grass to put into their boxes. The boxes are then placed under the beds of their parents or some near friend. The tradition is that when the Three Kings come to the home to distribute their gifts they feed their camels the grass left in the box by the child and leave a gift in it. On the eve of January 5, numerous tots came to the unit houses with boxes under their arms to be placed beneath the beds. Naturally the continental workers were attracted to a custom so different from their own and the next morning each little box had a small gift. Each year the number of children wanting to claim close relationship with the Americans doubled, and after several years workers were forced to discontinue playing the role of the Three Kings to all the children of the community. It was the general feeling that the unit workers were taking on an obligation which rightfully belonged to the parents.

*The Beginning of the Buena Vista Unit.* The crowded living conditions promoted a family spirit among the workers and when one moved out they felt much the same as when a member of a family leaves home. This was especially true when one of the charter members, James Hean, was transferred to the Buena Vista community center near Cayey, in January, 1944. He established his living quarters in a room in the back of the center and boarded at a Cayey restaurant. Hean lived in this manner for almost a year until a house was secured for the remaining

personnel assigned to the Buena Vista subunit. The boys' bunkhouse was never again the same without Hean's early six o'clock choruses. His musical talent, however, was utilized when he took over the direction of the chorus at the Cayey Baptist Church. His work in the Cayey congregation was highly appreciated by the pastor and members of the congregation. The sentiment of the pastor was expressed in a letter written to the director of the Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit.

"... one of our shortcomings was the lack of a good choir. But the Lord came and visited us, sending one of your boys to Buena Vista. . . . As soon as he arrived in Cayey, he came to our church and offered his services to us. And immediately he began to organize the choir and now we have a good choir attended by him. . . .

"The church is very interested in him, and in his nice work he is doing among our youth. We do appreciate this kind co-operation, and we do not have any doubt that this has been an answer to our constant prayer to God for many years. So we are having great benefits from your boys for the Lord in Cayey.

"You can feel proud of this group of boys you have in La Plata, for the work they are doing there, and I am glad they are helping our Christian movement in Puerto Rico."

*A Visit to La Perla.* Four of the unit members having heard about La Perla before coming to Puerto Rico decided to see it for themselves in February, 1944, since it was only a ten-minute walk from the business section of San Juan.

"La Perla Street, you know, is one of those sections of San Juan where poverty has brought many of its children together to form ugly splotches on the dark picture of human life on the island.

"As we walk down toward the sea, several small boys begin gathering around us. They take us to be rich *Americanos* with just lots of money for small Puerto Rican boys . . . several small boys are swimming in the debris-filled water. They are sun tanned and smiling, and having the best kind of a good time. . . . Their bathing suits are not too good, in fact most of them have just a few short rags tied around their waists, held together with an old belt—if at all. One or two do not even have rags, but of course, that is not so unusual for small boys in Puerto Rico. . . . We go on, following the shore as we go. There is no street left to guide us, only a maze of houses—if you can call these things houses which are perched on poles that look like so many wooden fence posts stuck in the mud and sand. We walk between them, following paths so narrow that often we can touch a house on either side by merely reaching out our hands. Sometimes we have to walk right under the house, stooping over a little so as not to bump our heads against the wooden floor

above. Many a sewer pipe lies on the ground, exposed to sun and air. Some are broken and rusted through, with the dirty sewage water flowing freely over the pathway where the little children are playing, and on underneath the houses. Debris and filth lie all around, and the smell of the place has become a part of everything.

"Yet people live here—men, women, children, young and old—many of them. La Perla is their home—the only home they have ever known. They are friendly—unusually friendly. Almost all of them smile and answer our greetings with a cherry *adiós* as we pass by. Once in a while we find a man or a woman from whom the squalor and dirt and the misery in which they have lived so long, have finally erased the last vestige of human response and left them with deep lines in their faces and a hopeless, dejected look and blank stare indelibly stamped upon their countenances. It is only to these few that this kind of life has meant a living death. The others live and breathe, and have their joys and sorrows, ambitions and aspirations like the rest of us, though they have little to draw from and hardly more than bare essentials to keep body and soul together. They call their shabby board boxes, homes. Tin roofs rusted by humid air and salt spray; walls made of old shipping crates on which are still seen the words, 'gross weight' . . . pieces of tin from old cans flattened out and nailed on; and odd pieces of asphalt roofing, probably torn by strong winds from roofs of other buildings, and salvaged—all these go into the making of them. Inside, the people live and eat, sleep and work, as in other and better homes.

". . . often we see little babies, and we hear them cry. We see their mothers holding them and trying to keep them quiet. It does not seem right that babies should be here. . . . It is not right that they should be moulded and shaped by the filth and disease all around them, that the poverty and dirt into which they have been born should forever determine their lot. The sight of them—sick and pale—keeps haunting us as we go on.

"We come to a small, weather-beaten house. Inside a group of people have gathered to pray. We hear their cries and the moaning and groaning as they are on their knees chanting and pleading. We imagine someone is sick, and they are calling on their God to have mercy. We keep listening to their prayers as we pass on. They are not the prayers of a people who live in communion and fellowship with a living God, but the shouts and cries of a people who in desperation and despair hope to be heard by a powerful and faraway God whom they do not know. They seem to have been calling for a long time. . . .

"Somehow, as we leave La Perla, we have a feeling of sadness. We feel that there is a job here—left undone. . . . We are a bit bewildered. We wonder why these things should be. Is it inevitable that these



people must live this way? We cannot have the feeling that it is. . . . Instead we have the feeling that we have seen something about which something must be done. We have seen something that must be blotted out forever if we are to escape those condemning words, 'I was sick and in prison . . . I was naked . . . hungry . . . thirsty . . .!'"

Anyone who visited La Perla Street six or seven years ago certainly has never forgotten the impression which was made upon his mind. Six thousand people lived in La Perla under the conditions as described, and La Perla was but one of the several slum districts of the San Juan capital. Fortunately something has been done. One of the first concerns of the recent Puerto Rican governors has been the cleaning up and clearing out of some of the worst slum areas. Many of these families have been moved into nicely constructed apartments, provided for them by the government under which they live. There still is much to be done, however, before everyone in Puerto Rico will enjoy the comforts of even a modest home. Though not surrendering to a feeling of complacency, one is reminded of the words of the Master when He says, "For ye have the poor always with you."

*The First Easter, 1944.* The Puerto Rican manner of celebrating Easter is even more different from the American manner than the Christmas celebration. Outside of Protestant groups the Easter festivities center around the Catholic Church. Good Friday is one of the most sacred days of the year to the devout Catholic. He who would dare to drive a nail on Good Friday is driving a nail into the coffin of Christ. He who dares dig or hoe in his garden is digging the grave of Christ. On Good Friday morning all loyal members of the Catholic faith gather at the church to spend the morning hours in keeping vigil over the symbolic body of Christ. Following this vigil they gather on the plaza in front of the church and about the middle of the afternoon they start the processional along the main streets of the town. The crowd of several thousand people marches along the street carrying a large cross, an image of the Virgin, and the coffin with the image of Christ, all carried above the head level of the crowd. Various orders of the Catholic faith march together in the procession, though the greater part of it seems to be composed of any who have been baptized. The procession, except for the bearing of the church symbols, has little semblance of a religious procession. The religious festivities centering around the death of Christ end on Good Friday evening with a sermon delivered by the priest. On Saturday the town children tie a dummy representing Judas on an old horse and chase him out of town by throwing stones at the horse.

In contrast to this picture is the Protestant method of commemorating the resurrection as well as the death of the risen Lord. Coming from

the loudspeakers of the Baptist Church of Cayey, Good Friday, 1944, was a stirring message on the resurrection of Christ, delivered by Dr. Ángel Mergal, a teacher at the Evangelical Seminary at Río Piedras. Though the unit members did not have a very complete knowledge of Spanish they enjoyed the long afternoon message given by Mergal. The Mennonite group was in complete charge of the Good Friday evening service at the Cayey church. The program consisted of numerous Easter hymns sung by the unit members and a message by the director. The same program was given at two other places, the Cidra Baptist Church and the Aibonito Methodist Church. To be able to worship with Puerto Rican friends in commemorating the death and resurrection of a living Christ was a real privilege. All were made more conscious of the fact that even in the face of language and cultural differences all Christians worship the same risen Christ who knows no racial or cultural boundaries.

*A "Fresa" Hunt.* Living in a tropical climate among so many people causes one to search for some type of recreation away from the crowd. To get away from the range of a human voice in Puerto Rico is almost impossible. News was received that somewhere near Aibonito was a hill covered with trees under which "fresas" (berries similar to raspberries) were growing in abundance. One afternoon in April the unit members decided to try berry hunting in Puerto Rico. Immediately after dinner they boarded the bus for Aibonito, and within walking distance of the town found a secluded spot. They were convinced soon that actually there is no place of seclusion in Puerto Rico for within half an hour they were surrounded by half a dozen boys, who, in addition to wanting to talk English, were more than willing to pick the fresas. Without the help of the professional pickers there would have been hardly enough berries to prove that they had been on a berry hunt, but thanks to the boys it was discovered that fresa jam is delicious. The unit members returned to the project refreshed, rested, and happy though a bit tired from their first experience of berrying in Puerto Rico.

*That Ever-present Problem, "Spanish."* One evening in May, 1944, one of the boys of the unit was called away from the supper table to answer the telephone, which at this time was quite some distance from the bunkhouse-dining room. As near as he could interpret, Wilbur Nachtigall, the director, who was in San Juan, was delivering a message about an "ambulance." Since this did not have too much meaning, another unit member with a slightly better knowledge of Spanish took up the conversation and began to speak in the language of the Island rather than his native tongue. Yes, it was all quite clear now. Nachtigall had

purchased a new stove and someone should meet the public Atlas Line car at Empalme, a mile from La Plata, at nine o'clock the next day to pick it up.

One of the unit members was assigned the job of picking up the stove. After he had waited half an hour at Empalme, the Atlas car came, and a nicely dressed gentleman with a suitcase got out of the car, reached out his hand and said, "My name is Stauffer, William Stauffer, from Sugar Creek, Ohio."

"But where is the stove?" inquired the unit member. Just then the smile on the chauffeur's face, and the sudden realization that the Spanish word *estufa*, meaning stove, and "Stauffer" have a similar sound, made it apparent that there had been another confusion of tongues.

And while on the subject of "language," one smiles now as he reads from the pages of the *Río La Plata*, that a graduation exercise was held in the community center, May 18, 1944, for the "Advanced Spanish Class," composed of the first arrivals to La Plata about six or eight months previously. The program included Spanish songs sung by members of the graduating class and a history, given by one of the graduates, telling about how the class had progressed under the teaching of four different public school teachers from the La Plata school. One wonders, seven years later, how the feeble efforts of the class must have sounded to the eager audience who were straining their ears to understand their own language. The most puzzling number on the program was the mouth-organ duet by two members of the class, in which the music continued after the performers had stopped playing. The curiosity of the audience was satisfied when the real player, Elmer Gingerich, stepped from behind the curtain.

*Visit to a Finca.* A high light in the early social experiences was the visit to a mountain *finca* (farm) owned by one of the former hospital patients. A brief description by one of the members of the party shows the generous hospitality of the Puerto Rican people. No matter how rich or how poor, the Puerto Rican people always stand ready to welcome strangers, and to make them feel at home on their little Island. The typical Puerto Rican is never too occupied to do small acts of courtesy and to place all he has at the disposal of his guest.

"One beautiful morning in June nine members of the unit and two Puerto Rican friends gathered at the store in preparation for the trip on horseback. Plans had been made to start by 9:30, but in typical Puerto Rican manner we waited until almost 11:00 before all of the borrowed horses had been brought to La Plata. After the horses had been assigned to their riders, the slow dependable ones to the amateurs and the more spirited ones to the experienced riders, we started down the road toward



the school, following the rough trail down to the river, which we forded. The trail led from the river between the green fields of tobacco and cane in the valley, past dilapidated wooden huts with people staring from the open doors and windows, smiling and responding to our *buenos días* and by one or two large tobacco barns. However, it soon became no more than a narrow rocky path winding its way up the steep slopes. Very soon we could look back over the green valley to the mountains beyond, with brilliant flamboyants marking the course of the road along their slopes. The beautiful hillsides, green and velvetlike since the rains had come, the tall palms and flowering trees; the little mountain streams splashing over the rocks in the ravines, the beauty of the clouds and sky, the fresh cool breeze—all made us realize again that heaven and earth reveal the glory of God. However, some of us who were new at horseback riding were concerned about staying in the saddle and watching the trail ahead, hoping that our horses' feet were steadier in the rocky trail than our own might have been. Then suddenly we reached a ridge between two peaks, and there was the home of Esperanza Rivera, our hostess. She owns a *finca* of 120 acres, on which forty families live and work.

"Soon we smelled a most delicious odor. We had been invited for *lechón asado*, roast pig. We watched the roasting of the young pig over the charcoal fire, with an old man continually turning the stick, which extended through the pig from nose to tail. We all enjoyed the meal—big heaping plates of not only roast pig, but also the traditional rice and beans, a goat meat and vegetable combination, another meat dish of kidney and liver, platanos, and bread. Dessert consisted of canned peaches and pineapples. According to custom, strong black coffee was served later. . . ."

*The Little Red Hen Who Contributed Toward the Service Program.* In 1944, when the hospital was in the process of being constructed, a little red hen left her near-by home and decided to become a faithful member of the project. Each day she was heard cackling in the half-finished hospital hall. Amid the sawing, pounding, and painting, the little hen chose the nursery as an appropriate place for her nest. An egg was left each day in the nest which was only a few feet from the kitchen. When the time came that the little hen had to be chased from the hospital and the doors closed, her spirits were not dampened. She rebuilt her nest just outside the kitchen door and still made her daily contribution toward the service program. After some discussion among the unit members as to whether or not her donations should be accepted, it was agreed that her owner, a neighbor, should be paid for all the eggs left by the generous service-minded little red hen.

*Lares Fire.* The tragic fire in January, 1945, in the little town of Lares, located in the western region of the island, offered opportunity to the Brumbaugh units to assist the hundreds of homeless people. Of the town's 4,302 population, 1,279 were left homeless by the conflagration. The majority of the people were taken care of by their relatives, but 379 had no place to go and were placed in a Red Cross camp just outside of town. A call came for a man from each of the three CPS units to assist in taking care of the camp. The men selected were Wilbur Nachtigall, La Plata; Chris Ahrens, Zaldondo; and Stanley Harbison, Castañer. For six weeks these men assisted the Red Cross in maintaining order in the camp by helping on such problems as providing recreation and enforcing sanitation. They were handicapped in carrying out an efficient program because of political difficulties between government agencies.

*Weddings—1944.* The director of the Brumbaugh Service Unit, Rufus B. King, set a matrimonial precedent in September, 1944, when he and Wanda Hoover were married in the Union Church of Santurce. Three months later Justus G. Holsinger and Salome Fast were married in the same church. Also in the month of December, Albert Bohrer and Carmen Rivera of Aibonito were married in the Comerío Church. All three of these weddings were attended by a large number of unit members and island friends of the units. Several weddings in the Brethren and Friends units also took place during 1944.

*Puerto Rico Study Group.* As the unit became larger there was a growing feeling that the workers should become better acquainted with the social, economic, religious, and political problems of the people among whom they were working. To work successfully with people one must have a knowledge of their history, culture, and customs. In April, 1945, a study of Puerto Rico was begun under the direction of the unit education committee. Each member of the study group chose a particular phase of Puerto Rican life and made a detailed study of it. He then presented a summary of his study to the entire group and submitted a paper. The various papers were assembled and printed in the form of a bulletin entitled, "Puerto Rico Study." This study proved valuable to all of those who participated. It helped to make them more conscious of the needs and problems of the people.

*The Unit Chorus Renders Easter Programs.* By the spring of 1945, the unit had acquired enough good singers among its workers to form a chorus. The chorus was organized under the direction of Victor Buller, and a program of Easter music of Spanish and English hymns was pre-

pared. On Palm Sunday the chorus gave a sacred concert in the La Plata community center. On Good Friday afternoon a program was given at Henry Barracks, a United States Army Post near Cayey, and in the evening of the same day the chorus sang in the Baptist Church in Cayey, where the entire unit were guests at a church supper. On Easter Sunday a music program was given in the Methodist Church in Guayama, where the entire unit was also invited. These musical programs given from time to time helped establish a very cordial relationship with other church groups.

*Two Unit Nurses Write Examinations While Watching Ball Game.* Grace Kauffman (Nachtigall) and Carol Diller had the good fortune of being able to watch a practice ball game from the bleachers of the Escobar stadium while writing the examinations for their nursing license in April, 1945. The strenuous task of writing examinations for four days was lightened considerably by the cool breeze from the Atlantic, the beautiful background of green palms and blue ocean, with the brain and pen working to the rhythm of the waves beating against the San Juan shore. The unusual setting under which the examinations were written seemingly did not handicap the examinees, since both girls passed the examinations with good marks, and became the first Menonite nurses with licenses to practice nursing in Puerto Rico.

*Some Choose Caribbean Sands as a Bed.* . . . Among a group of thirty or forty workers there are always a few venturesome individuals seeking new experiences. Three fellows made up their minds to sleep under the stars and coconut palms on the sands of the rolling Caribbean at the Arroyo beach in March, 1945.

"The picnic supper was perfectly arranged and even included such delicacies as summer sausage, potato chips, and pretzels, which had been sent to members of the group from friends in the States. As the picnic proceeded and the last chance to go to town drew near, several questions were repeated. Will it get any colder after the sun goes down? How about the mosquitoes, ants, lizards? Will the ground seem hard before morning? The one consistent answer seemed to be: 'Columbus took a chance, why shouldn't we?'

"The women and children and some of the men left for town and the comforts of a hotel room. The last chance for this doubtful comfort was gone and there were three of us left with the Caribbean on one side and the tropical island on the other. Before it became completely dark, we hurried to make our beds of dry palm leaves and then set stakes and tied our nets up. The next thing was a fire; and it took a lot of coaxing and feeding for dry palm leaves were the only fuel.



"Later the three-quarter moon rose through the scattered clouds and threw a highway of light out through the wide expanse of tossing black sea. Best of all was the colorful sunrise on Easter morning. It brought back memories of our sunrise services in the States. Only here there was no crowd and no clergy—just three of us drinking in the beauty of the coming day!"

*Several Unit Members Visit Homes in El Pito.* When unit members were not occupied with their regular duties frequently small groups would go visiting in homes of La Plata or its adjoining communities. Several workers accompanied the medical social worker into the Pito community in April, 1945. Pito is within two miles of the La Plata project, but is almost entirely a separate community since the people living there hardly know the people living in La Plata. One of the persons of the group recorded his observations. They picture the poverty and distress of the people of a little rural community almost untouched by PRRA influence, and practically outside the reach of the Mennonite program at that time. Fortunately, certain parts of the service program have since been extended into this community. Today almost every home has a sanitary privy, installed by unit sanitation workers.

"Our walk took us to El Pito, a small valley that opens into the larger La Plata Valley. The Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration does not exist in El Pito, but people do.

"We followed the path along the mountain sides. One believes the figures that are available; these figures say that 40 per cent of Puerto Rico's arable land has a slope of 40 per cent or over.

"There are banana groves and platanos. Over there, across the valley, smoke is rising from the charcoal pile; near by are the woods from which the *jíbaro* has hacked a pile of wood with his machete, and he is processing it in order to make charcoal. The eighty cents a sack he will receive for the finished product in Aibonito will put rice and beans on the table and drive old man hunger from the door for one day more.

"But, our purpose in going for this walk was to go visiting, and we were invited into three homes. The first, perched underneath the protective branch of a mango tree, was a sort of palace. It had three rooms, although small. There was tin on the roof and composition siding for walls. We were invited in and asked to sit down. Two naked children, four dressed children, an older son, the lady of the house, her daughter-in-law, and the *americanos* were in the room—plus a bed that is set up only at night and several hammocks, slung from the rafters.

"The bedroom was smaller than the room we were in; and the kitchen—well, it was so small that you could call it a 'super kitchenette.' Of course, there was no shining stove, work table, sparkling refrigerator;

just a dark, grimy table, cups hanging from the wall, and a small fire struggling to keep alive on a tin grill.

“‘And the children?’

“‘Well, they are getting along better now.’

“‘And are they getting milk?’

“‘Yes. There is milk for the children.’ The milk comes from the milk station established in the La Plata Valley by the Child Feeding Program of which Mrs. Grace Tugwell, wife of the Governor, is the director.

“Oh, yes, this family has one printed volume. Ironically enough it was a home medicine book and it cost \$7.50. Just ask the youngest urchin present!

“Now, the second home that we visited was ‘two bumps and a holler’ further down. And it wasn’t quite ‘main street’ like the first—one of the picturesque palm frond thatch houses, like you see on picture post cards. The thatch is tied to a crude framework of wood. The whole house costs the sum total of \$25.00. It has a wooden floor and it is approximately eight feet by twelve. The palm frond thatch for sidings and roof has to be replaced yearly at a cost of \$6.00.

“This one-room house contained the usual bed, a few hammocks, a bench, a few items of clothing, and from the rafters hung several pairs of ‘good’ shoes, worn only on special occasions!

“There were four children in the family. Luís, the oldest, could help his father in earning the family living. The youngest son, Guillermo, was two years old. He was just learning to walk with the aid of the family dog. The family had no cow, and Guillermo was underdeveloped to the extent that he was unable to walk at all until Wilbur saw to it that he received milk from the milk station. Ramón, age 12, walks down to the station every day for the family’s milk supply.

“The man of the house and his son were not working. Why not? Well, the tobacco season was over and there wasn’t any work. The total earnings of this family for one year were \$175.00.

“The third home? Well, there are ten in this family. There seemed to be more money in this home. There were four big grown boys working. There was a scrawny sow with several just as scrawny shoats. The family also had guinea pigs for eating purposes.

“There was a tuberculosis suspect in the family, so Grace put the patch test for tuberculosis on each member present. Now Wilbur plans to return and visit again in order to discover the findings.

“This concluded our visit for the day. What could we do for the people of El Pito? We could develop a public health program, surveying the valley for the incidence of syphilis, tuberculosis, and intestinal parasites. We might even encourage a sanitation project. I encountered nothing that even faintly resembled a privy.

"But, there are problems! It takes a lot of education to convince people to submit to the long, drawn-out treatment for syphilis; tuberculosis sanatoriums are hopelessly overfull now; and, as long as people have to depend upon the river for drinking water, they will have parasites.

"The visit wasn't perhaps as happy as one to the homes of the rich; but it did drive home the stark truth that the 'have-nots still exceed the haves,' and that mere subsistence living is still the lot of the majority, and that darkness still covers the face of the world, and that truth still needs to be found."

*First Hurricane Evacuation.* The hurricane warning of 1943 did not cause much excitement among the unit members because at that time there was almost no property to evacuate. When the personnel increased to around forty the situation was different. If a severe hurricane should strike, the unit would probably lose all personal belongings as well as the expensive medical equipment, since the community center was the only hurricane-proof building of the project. At 3:00 a.m., September 13, 1945, each unit member was awakened from his morning slumbers to report for hurricane evacuation. It seemed absurd that a weather observer could foresee a tropical storm at that time of the morning when the stars were shining brightly with not a cloud in the sky.

Within a matter of minutes each worker was at his assigned task in the evacuation machine. A careful plan for evacuation had been previously worked out and unit members were assigned to a particular crew. The total assignment was to move all hospital supplies, records, and patients to the community center, where they would be secure from the storm. Along with this was the moving of all personal belongings to the health department medical dispensary. After three hours of heavy lifting all was in preparation for the approaching storm. Following a warm breakfast, word was received from a radio report that the hurricane would probably by-pass the island. It was not until about 10:00 a.m. that the all-clear signal was received, which meant that the evacuation procedure could now be put in reverse and everything placed in proper order. The afternoon was therefore set aside for putting the camp back in order, a more arduous task than preparing for the storm. At least one other time the procedure of evacuation was carried out when an alert was given of an approaching storm.

*Prominent Visitors.* The proximity of Puerto Rico to the mainland and the fact that the three projects were begun as a place to use conscientious objectors to war, were largely responsible for the large num-

A typical mountain home, surrounded by numerous tobacco barns. The Mennonite subunit conducted a recreation and sanitation program in this community in 1944 and 1945.

Courtesy of Government of Puerto Rico. Photo by Rosskam





ber of prominent visitors. Many of the men who visited the La Plata unit had had little contact with the Mennonites in the States and knew little about their religious beliefs. In most instances the guests were interested in the program of work and were favorable toward this alternative to military service. The Brumbaugh Service Unit was honored in having Dr. Frank Laubach come to Puerto Rico and give a demonstration at Castañer of his method of teaching illiterates to read. Dr. Laubach is internationally known for his extensive literacy program in various regions of the world. His proposed literacy program for Puerto Rico, however, never materialized due to the lack of sufficient funds. Oswald Garrison Villard visited La Plata in March, 1944. Villard was a noted author and strong pacifist, having been a member of the FOR from its beginning. He was the grandson of the famous William Lloyd Garrison. In commenting on the work of the CO's in Puerto Rico he made the following statement: "My visit to Castañer was the high-water mark of my stay here. I cannot tell you how much it meant to me to see such a fine group of young people bent on doing a constructive, helpful, Christian job instead of planning how to kill some other young people."

When C. L. Graber and Frank Wenger of the MCC visited Puerto Rico in March, 1944, it was a privilege to have also two members of the Puerto Rican Legislature, Jesús T. Piñero and Mr. Ellsworth, spend the week end in La Plata. The unit fellows were especially impressed with the unpretentious manner of Piñero who slept in the bunkhouse with them. He later became the Resident Commissioner to Washington and finally the first Puerto Rican to become Governor. In the month of July, David Stern of Jerusalem, Palestine, visited the project. He was an agriculture engineer and was in charge of the Agriculture Colonization Department of a Jewish agency for Palestine. He manifested considerable interest in the economic problems of Puerto Rico and was emphatic in his denunciation of Puerto Rico's sugar economy.

Dr. J. Rodríguez Pastor, an eminent tuberculosis specialist, was a guest of the unit in June, 1945. He was favorably impressed with the work being done in tuberculosis by Dr. Amstutz. Dr. Rodríguez Pastor was at one time chief of the Tuberculosis Bureau of the Department of Health. Allen K. Chalmers, pastor of the Tabernacle Church, Broadway, New York, and John Nevin Sayre visited the project during the summer of 1945. Sayre was one of the national co-secretaries of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. During his visit he spoke on the future international relations in light of the San Francisco Conference. Another outstanding church leader to visit the project was E. Stanley Jones. He spoke at various places in Puerto Rico among which was the community center at La Plata. The meeting was well attended by persons from Castañer and Zaldondo, as well as by other Protestants on the island. In his



talk at La Plata he deplored the state of international anarchy and advocated an international government in certain fields of international relations. Following his lecture at La Plata, Jones spoke at the military camp of Henry Barracks, near Cayey.

Also among the visitors of 1944-45 were officials representing the respective sponsoring agencies, and church officials of certain constituent groups visiting Puerto Rico in the interests of their member workers. Among this group were the following: C. L. Graber, MCC relief director; Frank Wenger, Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, MCC representative; William Stauffer, General Conference Mennonite minister; Orie O. Miller, MCC executive secretary; Walter Gering, General Conference Mennonite minister; S. C. Yoder, president Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities; M. R. Zigler, executive secretary Brethren Service Commission; Paul Furnas, executive secretary Friends Service Committee; Gerald Stucky, General Conference Mennonite representative.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF 1946-47

*A Doctor Takes to the Tree.* The eating of the hedges on the project by neighbors' cows during the night has always been one of the unit's unsolved problems. The hedges between the director's and doctor's houses always had a special appeal to the cows, especially so one March night when the doctor was again awakened by noise of a cow chewing the tasty green hedge leaves. This time he decided to do something about it. It was his good fortune to discover a rope suspended from the cow's neck, as was quite common with Puerto Rican cows. Wouldn't it be embarrassing for the owner of the cow to have to climb to the top of the tree beside the director's house in the morning to untie the rope in order to take his cow home to be milked?

The doctor's climbing the tree made considerably more noise than anticipated, and the director's wife, interrupted from her slumbers, decided to investigate. The scene of a pajama-clad surgeon perched on a limb of the tree under a full moon at midnight must have looked as unusual to the hungry cow as to the director's wife.

*Farewells with Fun.* The going and coming of unit members during the fall, winter, and spring months of 1945-46, called for numerous festivities. The first workers leaving Puerto Rico were honored by banquet suppers, followed by a program of music and oratory. When leaving of workers became a more commonplace occurrence, banquets gave way to milk-station socials, scavenger hunts, and ice cream treats. At these social gatherings unit members reviewed the past years' experiences of the big family of workers. New arrivals were welcomed and oriented



into the La Plata fellowship at these same festivities. Frequently the leaving of workers was preceded by an auction sale to dispose of the numerous surplus articles not worth sending back. Sometimes the on-staying workers saw slight value in the worn-out radios, record players, clocks, and clothing, so, for want of a bid, they were sometimes given to Tito, an orphan boy, who made a business from selling gifts from departing workers.

*Time Out for Recreation.* One of the big social events of 1946 was on Decoration Day when the entire unit, except a few who had to stay with the hospital, went to Río Piedras on an outing. The group visited a sugar mill where they saw the process of extracting the sweet liquid from the cane and changing it into crude sugar. After some searching they found a nice beach on the north coast, where they enjoyed the cool Atlantic waves.

*When the Doctor Is Away the Hospital Staff Will Play.* When Dr. Amstutz went to the States for a vacation in the summer of 1946 the hospital operated at about half its normal capacity, making it possible for remaining members of the hospital staff to take a much-earned vacation. Some groups journeyed to the Virgin Islands by sail boats, while others toured the Island or went deep-sea fishing. Some journeyed to the higher altitudes of the national forest in the Toro Negro region.

*Earthquake Disturbs Siestas.* One Sunday afternoon in August many were awakened from their siestas by the constant trembling and shaking of beds and tables, and other furniture. After it was over and each one found out that everyone else had had the same queer sensation the united opinion was—that it must have been an earthquake. Eight slight tremors were felt. No serious damage was reported in Puerto Rico, though Santo Domingo suffered damages.

*Distinguished Visitor Takes Unit by Surprise.* “Can you imagine how ‘Dee’ felt when a distinguished-looking man walked into the hospital, shook his hand and calmly announced, ‘I am the Governor of Puerto Rico.’ We could hardly believe it at first, but Mr. Piñero himself, two of his American friends, and his official bodyguards were making a surprise visit to our little unit. . . . They went to the dining hall then and, Governor and all, sat on our crude benches and ate from our own enameled plates. We were glad that they seemed to be so favorably impressed, so much in fact, that the American friends offered to sponsor our new milk station at Salto.” This was one of the three occasions when Governor Piñero visited the project, one of which was before he was

appointed Governor. He was always a very good friend of the Menonite project. He was the first and only Puerto Rican to be appointed Governor by the President of the United States.

*First Wedding in La Plata Chapel.* In October, 1946, the first wedding took place in the La Plata chapel when Annabelle, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. George D. Troyer, was married to Lawrence Greaser. Two months later another wedding of unit members took place in the La Plata chapel, when Esther Miller was married to Nelson Hostetter.

*Caroling Again a Part of the Christmas Festivities.* Following the Christmas dinner the unit members and Puerto Ricans set out for the hills to sing Christmas carols to the homes of the community. Since the group was large it was divided into two sections making it possible to sing in eighty homes. As the carolers went from house to house, they were joined by others who came out of their homes to sing. The entire group was entertained with hot chocolate and toasted cheese sandwiches following the caroling.

*Initiation of a New Chevrolet Truck.* The unit celebrated the first day of the year of 1947 as they boarded the new truck and set out for an outing at the Fajardo beach, located on the northeast side of the island. Swimming, hiking, and picnicking were the activities enjoyed by the group who returned tired but happy that evening.

*Three Kings' Day Gift Distribution.* Early on the morning of Three Kings' Day a large group of children from the community gathered at the milk station for the customary distribution of gifts from the *americanos*. The gifts had been donated by friends in the States through the MCC office and had arrived in Puerto Rico several weeks previously. Delight was written on the faces of many children as they received their gifts of toys and clothing.

*MCC Commissioner Grants Permission to Purchase New Vehicle.* The unit vehicles were in bad condition when relief director, J. N. Byler and Mrs. Byler visited Puerto Rico in January. Director Lauver used the best vehicle of the unit, the dilapidated station wagon, to bring the guests from the airport to La Plata, a two-hour drive. The weary guests arrived at La Plata at midnight. On the trip the station wagon lights went bad, the gas tank sprang a leak, and a wheelrim broke. Permission was given to purchase a new vehicle.

*Personnel Changes Again Call for Social Activities.* During the winter and spring months of 1947, the unit again witnessed a major personnel change which called for the usual group social activities of banquets, roast pig, milk-station socials, and ice cream feeds. As appreciations were expressed to outgoing workers, welcomes were given to new workers who had recently arrived. At the final social for the Amstutz family, Mrs. Amstutz was quoted as saying, "I rehearsed this before my family at the breakfast table this morning so they wouldn't be too surprised. I remember reading how Job used to go out and offer burnt sacrifices for his children's deeds—and that is what I feel like doing now." The four Amstutz children often added life and zest to the unit, but no doubt they sometimes brought embarrassment to their parents as they tried to imitate the acts of elders at the unit dining room table. The Amstutz family got a rapid send-off, when in the midst of the farewell after-dinner program they received word that their plane was leaving that night instead of the following night as scheduled. All unit women joined in completing last minute tasks of packing in order that the Amstutz' would not miss their plane.

*Easter Sunrise Service Shared with Pulguillàs Mission Workers.* On Easter morning of 1947, the unit members rose before dawn and boarded the big truck for a sunrise service with the Pulguillas mission workers. The service was held on top of one of the big scenic hills of the Pulguillas vicinity. The program consisted of an Easter sermon followed by the singing of Easter hymns. Some of the spiritual highlights of unit life were the many occasions when the group journeyed to hills in the vicinity of La Plata, Aibonito, or Pulguillas for an outdoor worship service in the cool breeze of the evening or early morning.

*Playday with Castañer and Zalduondo and Fellow Workers.* The close working relationship of the three service units, Castañer, Zalduondo, and La Plata, during CPS days, created an intimate fellowship which continued throughout the eight-year period the three units have been in operation. Once or twice each year the workers from the service projects get together for a day of fellowship and recreation. The El Guacio workers later joined the other three groups in the playday activities since there was a kindred relationship between them and the other groups. In August, 1947, one of these playdays was held at La Plata, when the group played a basketball game followed by a picnic supper and song fest. These occasions were always looked forward to by members of the different groups since they offered opportunity to become acquainted and to renew the close fellowship brought about by the common purpose of the respective service programs.



*Christmas Day Celebrated with Puerto Rican Workers.* One of the added features of the Christmas festivities of 1947 was an afternoon Christmas social with the Puerto Rican unit workers. The purposes of this social were to help bring happiness to the homes of the workers by sharing with them the joys of the Christmas season, and also to create a closer fellowship between the Puerto Rican workers and the unit members. A part of the afternoon activity was a gift exchange. On Christmas Eve a program was held in the church. The program included the singing of Christmas carols and a Christmas message by the pastor. Following the church service the group caroled at the homes in the community. The unit Christmas dinner, consisting of roast chicken with the usual trimmings, was held in the nicely decorated unit dining hall.

## UNIT HAPPENINGS OF 1948-51

*Three Kings' Day Brings Joy and Sorrow.* Three Kings' Day morning found more than 200 children of the community gathered at the church awaiting the customary distribution of gifts, which this year was held at the church rather than the milk station. Excitement was high as the children opened their gifts. This was the last year that the unit distributed gifts in this manner to the children of the community. It was generally agreed that the unit's mass distribution of gifts was not good psychologically for the children, who according to the Spanish tradition should receive the gifts from their own parents. The following year gifts were distributed only to children of the Puerto Rican employees and to children of tuberculous parents. The Sunday school of the church also distributed small gifts to the children who attended regularly.

Three Kings' Day of 1948 was a day not soon forgotten by most unit members. The day was celebrated with an afternoon picnic-social at the falls of the La Plata River, about two miles from the project. When the group returned from the falls after dark, Henry (Pop) Harder lost his path and fell from a cliff down into the roadway. His slow recovery from the injury caused concern to unit members, since there was some fear that he might have received internal injuries from the fall. After a period of convalescence, however, he was again able to take up his duties as foreman of the parsonage construction.

*La Plata Host to Visitors from the States.* A. E. Kreider, secretary of the General Conference Mennonite Mission Board, accompanied by N. Paul Stucky, visited Puerto Rico in December and January of 1947-48. The purpose of the trip was to survey the Puerto Rican field as to the possibility of opening a General Conference Mennonite mission in Puerto Rico. While in Puerto Rico, Kreider gave a number of inspiring

messages. The interest of the Mennonite constituents in the Puerto Rican work was evidenced from time to time by the large number of visitors from various Mennonite congregations. In February, a group of thirteen members of the Morgantown, Pennsylvania, congregation visited La Plata as guests of Lester Hershey. Their time was spent seeing the beauties of Puerto Rico and becoming better acquainted with the mission and service programs.

*Public Address System Initiated in Easter Services.* Puerto Rico places much emphasis on Holy Week. Both Catholic and Protestant churches sponsor religious services throughout the entire week. Each evening of Holy Week, the pastor of the La Plata church delivered a pre-Easter message which was conveyed to the homes of the community over the newly installed loud-speakers, placed on top of the church building. The week's services were climaxed with the customary Easter morning sunrise service, which included a message by Aaron Webber, and Easter music by the American-Puerto Rican chorus, under the direction of Ralph Goering.

*Can a Hospital Be Operated Without Water?* In the early days of the project it was almost a daily experience to be without water in the mornings until the plumber got his breakfast and started the pump going. After the hospital was opened the frequent complaints from hospital personnel brought improvement to the system. In May, 1948, however, the unit really experienced difficulty in trying to operate a hospital without water for a ten-day period, when the pump, which pumped the water from a deep well for the entire community, was broken. Almost every possible means was used to transport water for hospital and unit use from a running faucet at the barn some distance away. Some carried buckets of water on their heads, some pushed wheelbarrows with milk cans filled with water, and some manned a cart borrowed from someone in the community. The emergency was finally met when the Puerto Rico Aqueduct Service brought a 3,000 gallon tank of water and parked it at a high level in order to siphon the water to the hospital. Such incidents as this caused the workers to appreciate the essential daily services taken so much for granted.

*Week of English Religious Services Appreciated.* As religious services were conducted more and more in Spanish, many of the unit members, who had not become familiar with the language, longed for English services. When T. K. Hershey, an Argentine missionary, spent some months in Puerto Rico on his return from Argentina, he consented to conduct a week of English services at La Plata for the benefit of the

unit workers. These services were held in May, 1948, and were greatly appreciated by the unit members.

*Puerto Rican Hospitality.* "No American could possibly refuse the gracious invitation to dine with Puerto Rican friends, rich or poor. The same quality and degree of hospitality radiates from the homes of the wealthy or the *jíbaro*. Doña Pancha came regularly to the medical clinic enveloped in finery and riding in a beautiful car. In appreciation for regained health she invited both doctors and a part of the hospital staff to her farm for a Sunday dinner. Anticipating dining with the elite in a modern Spanish mansion the group accepted her invitation.

"In a remote mountainous region at the end of an ascending and descending trail is the farm. A huddle of huts perched on characteristic stilts was the only architectural evidence of a home. Surely Doña Pancha didn't make a mistake in directions or maybe the doctor misunderstood! No mistake—Doña Pancha's colorful figure graced the doorway of her mountain home. What a let-down! First impressions were quickly canceled by the graciousness of the hostess. The guests were ushered into the tiny, bare living room. Gradually seats were provided for each, ranging from rockers to kegs brought in one by one by the neighbors. Visiting progressed as rapidly as the broken Spanish and English vocabularies permitted.

The tantalizing aroma of roasting pig from invisible regions reminded the guests that there was food in the immediate future. After what seemed hours the dinner was announced. Fourteen Americans suddenly realized that 'all good things come to those who wait.' They squeezed around a five-and-a-half-foot table sway-backed by its weight of delicacies. Roast pig, rice with chicken, kidney bean stew, *pasteles* (a favorite holiday dish), *viandas* too—consisting of boiled bananas, plantains, yautia, *apio* and sweet potato (all of which belong to the potato family)—and in the center a salad of colorful canned vegetables, completed the first course. Chunks of Puerto Rican bread were passed to each guest. What a feast! To consume a portion of each variety would challenge a professional gourmet. The guests were comforted by Coca-Colas and oranges, big, juicy ones—only such could alleviate the overstuffed sensation of the gastronomical regions. The Spanish mansion was forgotten. The simple, gracious manner of the hostess made her wealth seem comparatively insignificant."

"The *jíbaro* entertains. He has tasted and is thriving on spiritual food received from the life-giving Source through the efforts of Christians in the valley. The arrival of the guests is the signal for other members of the family to kill the chicken and prepare the supper. The young



host takes his friends to the corn patch. He points out the calabaza and yautia plants scattered among the stalks. This is the result of his effort to provide native food for his family. There is a patch of sweet potatoes too, the yellow variety which, someone told him, contains Vitamin A. Banana trees and a *quenepa* and avocado tree also contribute to the family diet. He would have his guests realize that he knows the 'right kind' of vegetables to raise which supply vitamins and minerals. He bought seed from the farmer in the valley.

"Supper is announced. This occasion is special—vitamins and minerals don't count. The host stands in the doorway of the tiny dining room while he watches his friends enjoy 'asopao.' And they do! The *asopao* is a skillful blending of native herbs with rice and chicken to produce a delicious thick soup. This with bread is the first course. Dessert consists of *dulce de lechosa* and coffee with milk and sugar. *Dulce de lechosa* is preserved papaya, flavored with cinnamon. After a pleasant half hour at the table the time is spent outside the hut singing Spanish hymns.

"In spite of all nutritional deficiencies and poor food habits, native hospitality is at its peak. They are proud of their dishes produced in 'cocinas' which we can hardly call kitchens. They never fail to invite friends though they have next to nothing. And friends never fail to enjoy the refreshment, however simple."

*Thanksgiving at McLeans.* Thanksgiving Day of 1948 was another special occasion enjoyed by almost all members of the unit. Thanksgiving morning found the group winding its way through the mountains to the McLean Conference Grounds located forty miles from La Plata. There they enjoyed the day reading, playing, and resting, between the picnic dinner and supper. The day was climaxed with an impressive Thanksgiving service in charge of Garland Farmer, the Disciples of Christ missionary who supervised the conference grounds. The service was held in the little outdoor chapel located at the top of the hill.

*Autumn Weddings.* While June is usually considered the month for weddings in the States, that has not been the case with continental workers in Puerto Rico. The autumn months, and more especially the month of December, have been the favorites. With two exceptions all weddings of unit members in Puerto Rico have been in the month of December, and those two exceptions were in November. Two unit weddings took place in December, 1944; two in November and December, 1946; and two in December, 1948. The two weddings of 1948 were those of Ralph Goering and Carmen Camacho, held in the La Plata church, and that of Robert Ehret and Elta Yoder held in Santurce. Two years later another

unit wedding took place in November, when Orvin Kaufman was married to Providencia Carrasquillo in the Cayey church.

*Fire Causes Excitement.* One evening in December, 1948, the curiosity of unit members and other La Plata people was aroused when they saw a bright red sky beyond the mountain southwest of the project. A telephone message revealed that there was a big fire in Aibonito, the nearest town, five miles away. The unit vehicles were soon loaded and on the way to the fire. Most of the buildings of an entire block in front of the town plaza were on fire. The fire trucks of neighboring towns were summoned to the scene of the fire, since Aibonito at that time did not have a fire department. Some of the trucks arrived in time to keep the flames from spreading to other parts of the town, but one truck was met by the La Plata group when they returned from the fire several hours later. This truck was creeping up the mountain with an apparently hot engine from overexertion. Even fire trucks in Puerto Rico are sometimes late for appointments.

*Governor of Alaska Visits La Plata.* In the month of December, 1948, Governor and Mrs. Gruening of Alaska, with Mr. Guillermo Esteves of PRRA, visited the La Plata Mennonite Project. Gruening had previously been the director of PRRA, some years before the Mennonite work was begun in Puerto Rico. His reason for being in Puerto Rico at the time was to attend the inauguration of Governor Luís Muñoz Marín. He was interested in seeing what the Mennonites were doing in Puerto Rico since he had received word that some Mennonites were interested in beginning work in Alaska. What seemed to impress the Governor most was that in Puerto Rico the Mennonites had worked side by side with a Federal Government agency in sponsoring a community service program, whereas he had always understood that the Mennonites were extremely slow to associate themselves with government agencies.

*Unit Spends New Year's Eve in Puerto Rican Home.* One of the outstanding festivities of the Christmas season of 1948 was the New Year's Eve spent in the home of the unit medical social worker, Lydia Esther Santiago. Here, for the first time, many unit members witnessed the beautiful manner in which the Puerto Rican homes celebrate the closing moments of the year. It is customary that all members of the family return home for the evening celebration. If some member cannot be at home the entire evening, he makes it a point to be there as the old year goes out and the new year comes in. At the hour of midnight, emotional expressions of joy and good wishes are exchanged as members of the family embrace each other. If one member is absent, it brings sadness to

the parents. Many families are saddened in time of war when their soldier sons are away and cannot return. The evening's activities in Lydia's home were made more impressive by a short period of devotions conducted by the father of this Christian family. The evening was spent in singing English and Spanish Christmas carols.

*Unit Outings of 1949.* Since Good Friday is the most important holiday of the year to most Puerto Ricans, the unit members have formed the practice of operating the project on that day without the help of the Puerto Rican workers. The hospital, kitchen, and laundry must operate, so each unit member takes his turn at an assigned task. On Saturday preceding Easter, 1949, the unit members enjoyed an afternoon on the Dr. Troyer farm at Pulguillas picking Puerto Rican berries, more commonly known as *fresas*. Following the mountain climb in search of berries the hungry pickers took time out for picnic supper of scrambled eggs and bacon fried over a charcoal fire on the mission lawn. The unit was joined by the mission personnel at the supper. The highlight of the evening was the hike to the top of the mountain for the evening Easter meditation in the cool of the April evening.

Another enjoyable outing of the unit was the evening spent at the Richard Johnson home, on top of a high hill near Caguas. A supper was enjoyed on the lawn with a cool spring breeze sweeping across the crest of the hill. Following the supper the regular weekly prayer service was conducted on the lawn with Richard Johnson giving an inspiring message. Johnson was at the time superintendent of rural work of the Protestant churches of Puerto Rico.

Other unit social gatherings that took place during the year were the Fourth of July picnic supper at the falls of the river, with the Pulguillas mission personnel as guests of the unit; the October social in the community center in honor of the three Mennonite pastors who were changing pastorates; and the Thanksgiving Day fellowship with mission personnel at Palo Hincado. Playdays were held at Castañer and La Plata, at which unit members joined with workers from the Castañer, El Guacio, and Yuquiyu projects in a day of athletic games and fellowship.

*The Unit Visits the Jesuit Seminary at Aibonito.* In October, 1949, the unit visited the new Jesuit Catholic Seminary located on a high hill above the town of Aibonito. All of the unit members had seen the beautiful white structure with its tall tower but few, if any, had visited the school.

The group was met by the assistant superintendent, since the superintendent was engaged in spiritual exercises and could not come. The guide was very gracious and informative in showing the group through



the beautiful new building made of concrete with tile floors. The ground floor consisted of classrooms and a section resembling a dormitory with small rooms on both sides of the corridor. This section was set aside for members of the Catholic Church who wished to retire for a short period of time for spiritual refreshment and private meditations.

The group climbed the five-story tower, from which hung a huge bell imported from Spain. From the tower one could get a lovely view of the town of Aibonito and its surrounding countryside. The student chapel contained the usual large statues and other objects of worship.

The seminary is actually a school to prepare boys for the priesthood. The students vary in ages from eleven to sixteen and no academic requirements are set up for entrance. The first requisite is that a boy feels the call of God to be a priest. The boys are closely observed and under strict discipline at all times. They are permitted four weeks' vacation each year during which time they may visit their homes, but the vacation must be broken into two-week periods for fear that the boys may be influenced not to return to school. After completing the course at this institution the boys are sent to Santo Domingo or to the United States for further training, the entire training period taking twelve years. They are not obliged to continue their training period if they wish to discontinue. In fact, it was anticipated that of the seventy students attending only about fifteen would actually complete the twelve-year course. This trip to the Jesuit Seminary was conducted as a part of a study made by the unit, of the Catholic Church of Puerto Rico, in order to become better acquainted with its doctrines and practices.

*Another Christmas Season.* The big mailbag which arrived each day at the La Plata post office indicated that Christmas was again approaching. Each day's mail brought packages of all shapes and sizes and greetings from far and near. Older folk as well as children anxiously awaited mail delivery time when the month of December approached. Uncles and aunts, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, and friends, all joined in making Christmas a pleasant experience for the workers and their children. The Christmas festivities of 1949 were begun with a candlelight musical program in the church by the La Plata chorus under the direction of Mrs. Robert Ehret. Several days later the chorus gave a program in the Coamo Baptist Church. The regular Christmas dinner with roast turkey and all the trimmings was enjoyed on December 24. On Christmas Eve seventy-five carolers met at the church and divided into three groups to sing at the various homes in the valley. On Christmas morning each small child of the Sunday school was surprised to receive a package containing an apple, candy, and a toy. Most of the unit members again spent New Year's Eve at the home of Lydia Esther

Santiago. About a dozen members spent a part of the holiday season at the Polytechnic Institute at San Germán, attending the Protestant Youth Conference.

*Three Brave Lads Decide to Hike Cross-Country to Mayagüez.* Anyone who has never seen Puerto Rico cannot possibly appreciate the courage displayed by three young men of the unit when they declared they were ready for the much talked-about hike from La Plata to Mayagüez. Certain excerpts from the diary of one of the hikers will help to show the difficulties one encounters when he leaves the highways with their *guaguas* and tries hiking the mountains with, and without trails.

"January 16. There we stood at 6:15 a.m. in a nice drizzly rain ready to start our trip to Mayagüez by foot. That was the La Plata farewell. . . . About a half mile farther we stopped for our first ten-minute rest stop. There and then we decided to keep this diary. No pencil or paper! We started out again after shifting our pack. At 7:40 we stopped in an old abandoned cabin because it was raining rather briskly. We packed up again at 8:35 and headed on. The people were starting out to work in the fields late because of the rain. The trails were muddy and steep. We were wet to our knees in no time and there is no sign of a change in the weather. . . . We just stopped at this little store by the side of the road and bought 3¢ worth of pencil, 2¢ worth of paper, and 1¢ worth of cinnamon bark.

"12:30 . . . We found a store about 500 feet from where we reached the road. We bought a yard of bread and two cans of wieners. We ate all that and then took a vote to open a can of sardines. After they were down the second vote called for beans. No spoon! Big joke, but we had some cinnamon bark and that is the new spoon. . . .

"2:10 p.m. Addona bought three feet of bread before we left the last store. A man told us we would need a boat and ropes, and it would take two days to go three miles the way we were headed, so we took his advice and went up the road toward a place where it was supposed to fork. From there a path would take us into Cuchilla. Well, no one knew of such a road when we got that far, so we stopped at this store. The man said we could take this path. . . .

"3:40 p.m. We got some bum directions some place and we walked out of the way almost to Pulguillas until we got stopped. We are now waiting at a house for a rain to pass over. The woman here thinks we are 'loco.' She says the road will get worse. That can't be, because then we would need a boat or else have to swim. . . .

"January 17, 8:05 a.m. We haven't started yet for the day. We are waiting for the bread to come to this little store. . . . The old tobacco barn was really cold and windy. We slept on two-inch planks and piled

fertilizer bags around us, but we were still cold. I broke the zipper on my sleeping bag during the night and had a real breezy time. We had breakfast in our sleeping bags. Raw oatmeal, canned milk, sugar and water in some leftover tin cans made up the menu. . . .

"January 18, 9:15 a.m. Last night we met some people along the road, so we asked them if there was a shack or some old barn around. They told us there was a swimming pool down the road and some houses, too. We walked three kilometers and then up a pretty path of stone steps. There was a rocky gorge with a gushing brook running through it. We followed and found a big swimming pool of mountain spring water. . . . There was a big bathhouse on the hill overlooking the whole scene, so we entered. . . . In the dressing room we changed our clothes, brushed our teeth, and washed our feet and socks. . . . Another hard night of waking up and trying to find a place where we didn't sleep on a sore bone. . . . Maynard didn't eat much and wasn't feeling very well, but we kept on pretty steady. We are tired boys but our courage is undaunted despite the fact that we are out of food and a big half-day's trail lies ahead before we have hopes of acquiring more. We can plainly see Ponce, the Caribbean, and the Atlantic.

"January 19, 9:30 a.m. Addona took care of the last entry. I sure felt punk the last twenty-four hours. . . .

"11:40. Adjuntas at last. We have sore feet. We are going to have a hot dinner this noon. It will be the first since Sunday noon. . . .

"We left Adjuntas at 12:40 and followed the road to Castañer. We turned down lots of offers for rides. We asked one guy how far it was to Castañer and got an eight kilometer answer. The next man said twelve, and the next one eleven. These men were stationed at about three kilometer intervals, and I think they were in cahoots.

"... We certainly were received royally at Castañer. We had showers. Addona and I shared a razor blade, and then we got hot supper. . . .

"January 21. We were treated like kin at El Guacio again and had a good night's sleep, too. . . . We got the idea that since we walked five kilometers out of the way to El Guacio we could ride five in a *publico*, so at kilometer No. 5 we stopped a car and rode into the heart of Mayagüez. I wanted a shave, so we all decided to get one. I guess the boy couldn't understand Ez's Spanish because he really gave him the works—mud plaster, facial, scalp stimulant, shave, shoulder, back and face massage, and then a lotion of five different smells in one. . . .

"January 24. Yesterday morning we walked down to the depot and waited for the 'limited.' By this time we were depleted financially, so we rode *segunda clase*, 95¢, and the ride lasted all day . . . all in all we were bored. Nothing exciting happened to shorten the ride and nothing could speed up the engineer either. Finally, at about four



o'clock we did kill a cow. This extraordinary feat brought the train to a halt and the entire passenger population to its feet, only to have them brought to an abrupt sitting position again when the engineer decided it was time to get out of that part of the country. . . .

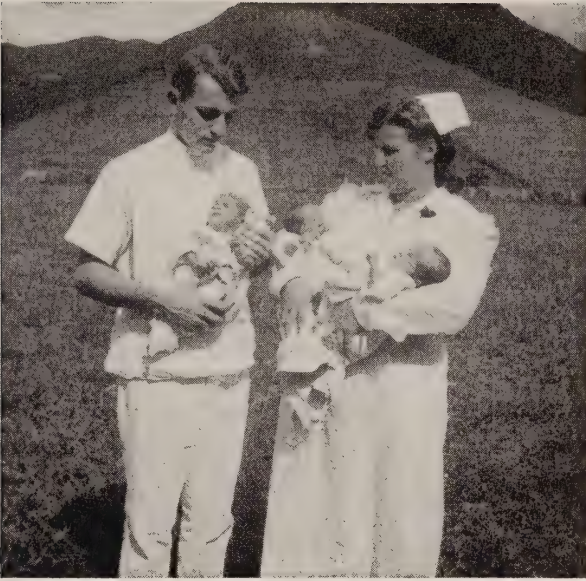
"January 25. . . . The trip back to La Plata was just one of those things. You wait and wait for the bus until you think you have missed it. . . . We hiked the last mile back from Empalme, and reached La Plata at 2:45 p.m. This was the first, and probably the last, anyone from here took that kind of a vacation."

*Many Unit Members Visit Homes of Community.* During the spring months of 1950, the regular Tuesday evening Bible study meetings, usually held in the church, were held in various homes of the community, more especially in those homes in which some of the family were members of the church. These services took the form of a weekly prayer meeting rather than the customary Bible study. Through these meetings many unit members visited the homes and enjoyed an evening with fellow Christians. The home, church, and unit were brought closer together by means of the meetings.

*First Triplets Born in Mennonite General Hospital.* In the month of August, 1950, the first triplets were born in the Mennonite General Hospital. The little boy and two girls were children of *jibaro* parents living a short distance from the project, with six other children in the family. Dr. Swartzendruber was probably as happy as the father, at having the honor of delivering triplets during his second year of medical practice.

The Pet Milk Company furnished canned milk to these triplets until they were a year old. At the end of their first year the children were healthy robust babies, thanks to the Pet Milk Company, and to the good care given them in the Mennonite General Hospital during their first few months.

*Another Outing of Four Service Units.* Sixty-eight workers from the four service units, Yuquiyu, Castañer, El Guacio, and La Plata, enjoyed an outing in the Caribbean National Forest located in the mountains near Jayuya, in October, 1950. The La Plata group traveled almost twice the necessary distance since they had not previously studied carefully the map of Puerto Rico. The route taken led them through the town of Jayuya, which received international publicity only a few weeks later when it became the center of the Nationalist insurrection, being held by the Nationalists for a short time until captured by the National Guards. Few unit members regretted having traveled those extra miles in getting to the camp grounds, as they listened several weeks later to radio reports



Dr. Swartzendruber and Janette Lewis with triplets  
born at the Mennonite hospital.



Poor family happily accepts the added economic responsibility of triplets.

of the burning of municipal and federal buildings by the Nationalists, and of the National Guards entering the town with machine guns and other artillery as the Nationalists fled to the hills.

*Two Homes Made Happy on Three Kings' Eve.* In addition to the usual Christmas activities of caroling, chorus programs, Christmas dinner, and gift-exchange social, there was a gift shower in the homes of two families of the church, who had suffered from extended sickness. Don Pedro Rivera, who had been an old friend of the unit since its beginning and had spent many days working in the unit farm fields, was suffering from cancer discovered some months previously. Don Pedro and his wife had united with the church several years before his illness, and had been legally married in the church after having lived together for years as common-law husband and wife. Don Blas Torres, suffering from bilharzia, was among the first group to unite with the La Plata church. He too had worked on the unit farm and was no longer able to work because of illness.

On Three Kings' Eve these homes were visited by a large group composed of unit members and Puerto Rican church members, each carrying a useful gift for the family. Each family received gifts in clothing, food, and money, a chicken and a goat, the goats having been purchased from money donated by a friend in the States. The children of these homes were especially grateful for the kindness shown them by their brethren in Christ, for they would probably have missed the traditional joys of Three Kings' Day had they not received these gifts. Occasions of this kind helped to bind the ties of Christian friendship among the Puerto Rican church members and the continental workers.

*A Man from the North Looks at La Plata.* The typical unit worker soon becomes absorbed into the usual routine and within a few weeks the unusual things at La Plata become common everyday happenings. It is not until an observant visitor from the States arrives and starts talking about the numerous toads, the car horns, the long loaves of bread, the Puerto Rican hospitality, etc., that one realizes he is surrounded by the unusual, some good and some bad.

"There is the pungent odor of burning wood at 4:30 in the evening . . . the chorus of roosters at 4:30 in the morning . . . the clear call of the *coqui* as the dampness of twilight comes on . . . the clatter of horses' hoofs coming up the river road . . . *guagua* horns and the swish of tires sliding around curves . . . the sudden burst of a shower on a metal roof . . . mush and liverwurst a la Brandeberry . . . roast pig laid out on banana leaves . . . the noise of the 'cancha' . . . hymns ringing over the valley from the loud-speakers on the church . . . lessons from Job



at Friday night young people's meeting . . . Puerto Rican hospitality in the homes of Melquiades and Don Francisco . . . the huddle around Don Jorge's place . . . crescendo cries from the hospital . . . David and Donnie peering through the bushes watching for Daddy . . . Freddie's *Oye* . . . Patty's pertness . . . Bobbie's sunburned cheeks . . . Paul Lauver's musical Spanish . . . stalled laundry machinery . . . the monstrous *cuca-racha* trapped in the glass from which Bender drank coconut milk . . . the friendly toads catching flies under the electric light above Doc Swartzendruber's door . . . passion flowers blooming over the Swartzendruber cottage . . . tobacco plants marching up hill . . . dark eyes peering through the window . . . Emma and Dean in a *tete á tete* . . . the African tulip tree covered with St. Peter's roosters . . . bougainvillea . . . poinsettias . . . fog over La Plata Valley . . . all of these and many more are memories of two short weeks in Puerto Rico.

"Then there were the conferences in the center, the interviews in the social room, the fellowship in the dining hall and in the homes of various workers, and trips to Pulguillas, Palo Hincado, Cuchilla, Coamo Arriba, and Rabanal, to fellowship with the missionaries and their Puerto Rican co-workers in addition to the opportunity to brush up on rusty Spanish. I have returned home thanking God for the sincerity and consecration of all our workers in Puerto Rico, and particularly their willingness to co-operate in making the total Mennonite witness in Puerto Rico more effective for the winning of the lost."

*Another Week of Religious Services in English.* Each unit member looked forward to special services in English since the only regular English services were the midweek unit prayer meeting and the Sunday afternoon Vesper service held once each month. When T. H. Brenne-man, the bishop in charge of the Mennonite Church in Puerto Rico, visited Puerto Rico during the month of April, 1951, he consented to give a series of English sermons to the unit during the week of April 20. These meetings were attended by mission personnel and other Mennonite workers living in the vicinity of Aibonito, as well as by unit personnel. Such meetings always refreshed the spiritual life of the workers.

*Devotions with Hospital Patients.* Each day of the week some form of hospital devotion has been conducted with the patients of the wards. Some mornings almost the entire unit brings a message in song to the patients. Other mornings unit members, with a command of Spanish, and Puerto Rican Christians, take turns in reading a passage from the Bible with a few words of meditation and prayer. The purpose of these devotional periods has been to bring the message of Christ to comfort or to convict those who may be suffering from physical or spiritual illness. The hospital devotions have not been used for proselyting since

the institution is operated for the purpose of rendering medical service to people of all creeds, in the name of Christ.

The following quotation will show the joy a housewife finds in taking a few minutes out of a busy morning to bring cheer and happiness to the hospital patients of the women's ward.

"Breakfast was over at our house, Royal was off to work, and Vicky was romping on the floor, happy with his tummy full of pablum. At 7:30 I hurried to the hospital. The morning was balmy with a golden haze flooding the valley and enriching the already glorious flamboyant trees. 'Father, bless the reading of Thy Word,' I prayed as I walked along.

"All week long, as I read the Bible and prayed with these women, I had received not one smile nor word of response. This morning as I stood outside the door, I heard one of the patients say something about the 'americana.' 'Oh, my,' I thought, 'they're probably wishing I wasn't here!' But no—a cheery good morning chorus greeted me as I entered the ward. Those eating (it was breakfast time) laid down their spoons and listened intently as I read from Romans 8. The Spirit was in the room as God's Word asked, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' After prayer they thanked me, and when I apologized for interrupting their breakfast, one woman said that what was brought to them was better than food, it was for the peace of their souls. The Word of God is quick and powerful!"

*United Nations Official Visits La Plata.* Miss Moses, a native of Delhi, India, with Mrs. Concepción, a teacher from the University of Puerto Rico, visited the La Plata Mennonite Project, June, 1951, and took lunch with the unit. Miss Moses, who has been in charge of the training of medical social workers for India, was given the assignment by the United Nations to make a study of the social service programs of Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Egypt, and India, and make a report of her findings. She was informed of the La Plata Mennonite project by members of the faculty of the university.

*Recent History of Unit Recorded on a Quilt.* Soon after the announcement of Lydia Esther Santiago's engagement to Josué Colón, it was suggested that a friendship quilt would be an appropriate wedding gift. Each family or worker who was a member of the unit or mission during Lydia's three-year term of service, contributed a block. In addition to the names of the workers the blocks contained distinctive needlecraft designs. As long as the quilt lasts, Lydia can never forget all of her continental fellow workers, and they will always remember Lydia as a sincere, jovial friend.

# Program of Evangelism

### ROOTS OF EVANGELISM AT LA PLATA

Since the MCC unit was not fostering an organized religious program during the years of 1944 and 1945, it might appear that little effort was put forth to point people to Christ. This was not the case, however. There was a deep concern on the part of unit workers for the spiritual welfare of the people of the community. They began the respective services by ministering to human needs of the people "in the Name of Christ," hoping that in the near future they might be permitted to tell more about the Christ who had motivated them to service, and eventually to lead the people to experience Him in their lives.

Several factors prevented unit workers from undertaking an organized religious program in the community. CPS men were under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government, working as assignees under Selective Service. Though they were not strictly forbidden to do direct religious work, they were well aware of the fact that any repercussions arising from a direct religious program might cause Selective Service to withdraw the service units from Puerto Rico, and thus destroy the possibility of initiating an organized church program after the war. Another factor which made it difficult to launch a religious program was that none were sufficiently versed in the language to carry on a teaching program of religion in the community.

The concern on the part of unit members for a spiritual emphasis along with the continued service activities was clearly expressed in a quotation from one of the La Plata workers in 1944.

"He that setteth his hand to the plow and looketh back is not fit for the kingdom of God.' We have set our hands to the plow—the unit here at La Plata, the Mennonite Central Committee, the supporting Mennonites from all over the United States. There is work to be done. Are we going forward, or will we stop to look back?

"Our program is now a service program with special emphasis on medical service and community building. Are we going to continue in that direction? We say, 'Yes, we are meeting needs,' but we are aware



of one fact that service which looks only as far as the physical and educational needs, falls short of the goal that Christ has set for us. Without Christ, the spirit of man can never reach its highest degree of beauty and usefulness. We must seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and share it with our Puerto Rican friends. In order to reflect the kingdom of God, it must have first become real in our own lives.

"As a program of service without concern for the spiritual welfare falls short of Christ's commandment, so does one of preaching without the social service which prepares the soil and makes the spiritual growth possible.

"Specifically, I feel that these people must learn to help themselves first, and not run to the doctor with every little cold or scratch, and not to depend on the good will of others to supply their food and clothing. They are able to work and should solve their own problems. Then, they must learn to help others. Both are Christian qualities requiring constant cultivation and care, and trained Christian leaders are needed to effect such a work. A satisfactory and effective future program needs to take into account and keep in proper perspective the whole problem of the people we are trying to serve. They have great spiritual needs, but likewise they have enormous physical and social needs. A program of medical service, vocational counseling and aid, and community building integrated with an active church program would give point and maturation to the whole.

"After the La Plata project ceases to be a CPS camp, it may be called a mission field, but its relief activities should continue. Reasons for having continued MCC support and personnel similar to what we have now are that meaningless denominational differences have a chance to drop out and a truer Christian example is set than any single branch could demonstrate. Having the project under one branch of the church would be advisable only if it keeps in mind making Christians out of these people, not merely Mennonites."

The emphasis placed on spiritual life by the unit is reflected by the fact that almost immediately provision was made for group worship in the form of daily devotions, unit Sunday-school classes, and regular Sunday church services. Early in the history of the unit, members expressed themselves in church papers to the effect that the Mennonite Church should be alert to supplement the service program with an organized evangelistic program. Unit members participated frequently in services of other denominations on the island, thereby forming a friendship with other Christian people. Programs were given in various churches commemorating special occasions such as Christmas, Easter, and church anniversaries. There is no way of knowing how valuable these early religious contacts with other Christians were in helping to

1. La Plata Mennonite Project
2. Rincon Community Center
3. Buena Vista Community Center
4. Pasarell Community Center
5. Pulguillas Mission Station
9. Rabanal Mission Church
7. Palo Hincado Mission Station
8. Cuchilla Mission Church



become established as a church group. Especially valuable were the frequent contacts with the Evangelical Seminary at Río Piedras, which was in touch with the leading denominations of Puerto Rico.

The interest of the unit in the spiritual life of the community is also shown by the fact that a Sunday afternoon hymn service was organized in the community center in 1944. Young people in the community joined together in singing familiar hymns. The programs consisted of special instrumental selections by unit members and of group singing. This service was discontinued because the center was federal property with specifications that it should not be used for religious meetings.

Among the highlights of group worship activities were the evening vesper services held at the "spring" on Aibonito hill. Here hearts were united in worship to the Creator of all the natural beauty of the tropical surroundings. Other group services which helped to elevate the spiritual life of the unit were Easter sunrise services for which the entire group arose before dawn. They journeyed to a high mountaintop in the cool morning breeze from the Caribbean, to sing "The Lord Is Risen Indeed" as the sun rose from behind the eastern mountain. Almost every religious holiday was seasoned with a social activity followed by a worship service.

One of the most impressive unit vesper services was the Thanksgiving service of 1945, conducted on the Pulguillas hill where the mission is now located. The land had been transferred to the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities for the establishment of the mission, but nothing had yet been done toward clearing it for the construction of the first houses. A path was cut through the trees and brush, to the spot where roast pig was served to the group. Following the social hour, a Thanksgiving vesper service was held in which all joined together in thanks and praise to God for the many blessings of the past year, and especially for His leading in the planning of the work in Puerto Rico. The landowner and his wife, who had donated the land for the mission, were also present. As one now enters the grounds to the mission with its concrete houses and recently constructed church, he is reminded of that Thanksgiving service—the first Mennonite worship service at Pulguillas.

Bible distribution was another important part of the religious program of the unit before the organization of a church. An organization was set up in 1944 to distribute Bibles in the regions where the service program was in operation. The Bibles were purchased from special funds contributed toward that end, and by March, 1945, the average monthly distribution of Bibles and Testaments had reached seventy-five. The Bibles were generally received with interest and in many instances they were given upon requests, especially among the young people. No one will probably ever know the value of this program of Bible distribution,





A Bible school class. Luke Birky is the teacher.



A church service at Penon.

but one of the faithful Puerto Rican church workers who was once a hardened drinker says that the first step toward his becoming a Christian was the reading from a Bible given him by one of the unit workers. When he later came in contact with the spoken Word he accepted Christ and became a faithful worker in His kingdom.

The beginning of the first Mennonite Sunday school in Puerto Rico will be of most interest to the readers in the words of the promoter.

"While I was at my usual task in the laundry, Francisco, a short lad of sixteen years, stopped in for a short chat. . . . He did not have much to do or talk about, and while lolling around noticed a little booklet, 'The Gospel of John,' lying on the table, and asked if he could have it. Not knowing the boy too well, I asked him if he could read. . . . He answered that because of sickness and poverty he was unable to continue beyond the second grade of public school, but stated that he could read. After he read a portion to me, I asked him to accept this little booklet and learn by memory some of its precious verses.

"In a week Francisco returned and smilingly recited clearly to me John 3:16. He added, 'I want to learn one for next week.' This continued and his brother also wanted one of these booklets and the opportunity to memorize verses. For a while it was just the two of them, who came from across the river every Sunday afternoon to recite their Bible verses, and sing new songs, as explanations to the same were given. These two invited their neighbor friends to come along with them, and we organized a class, teaching them some of the interesting stories of the Bible. Interest continued to grow, and attendance stepped up to twelve and fifteen. Having boys from five to seventeen years of age in the same class made it advisable to organize another class."

In this simple manner began the first Mennonite Sunday school in Puerto Rico in 1945. These boys saw something in unit workers that they admired and wanted; when they found that it was God's Word transformed into Christian living, they were eager to study and learn more about that Word. This Sunday-school class might well be termed the beginning of an organized religious program for the community.

Another religious activity which helped in putting the unit in close touch with Christians of other groups was the unit quartet which gave musical programs in many churches on the island. The first quartet, composed of Earl Maust, Wyman Sundheimer, Marvin Dyck, and Erwin Schrag, established a reputation for the Mennonites in the field of sacred music. Many people from various denominations today refer to the time when the Mennonite male quartet sang in their church. In spite of personnel changes the quartet and chorus work was continued, and Mennonite choruses and quartets are still requested for special church programs at different churches on the island.

One of the points of C. L. Graber's recommendations when he visited Puerto Rico in April, 1944, was that a chapel should be constructed at La Plata as a place for unit worship, and that it be built with the intention of becoming a center of worship for the community. Because of the large construction program necessary in getting the hospital functioning, chapel construction was delayed. There was no doubt concerning the need for a chapel for unit worship but the question of using it as a community church presented several problems. If people began attending worship services, unquestionably in a matter of time some would want to unite with the Mennonite Church. With so many different Mennonite groups represented in the unit, and with no ordained Spanish-speaking Mennonite minister on the Island, it was not clear how converts would become baptized into Mennonite fellowship. Executive secretary Orié O. Miller expressed the MCC position on the question in a letter of April, 1945, in which he said:

"As MCC workers we want to be a Christian missionary witness in all our life and activity and words. The MCC, however, cannot take the place of any of the mission boards of our constituent groups. We have no assignment that has to do with church building. We want to integrate our program into the work of these other organizations in these respects. Having said this, we, however, also have a clearcut assignment from our constituent groups which we are assuming the groups will not want to embarrass us in or to make difficult for us. The MCC feels that the Lord has called it to a job at La Plata and for an indefinite term ahead. As for the MCC, we are not in position now, nor will we be at any determinable date in the future, to negotiate the transfer of our La Plata project to any group outside or inside the Mennonite Church."

Thus, in 1945 there was no plan on the part of MCC to turn over the project to any of the Mennonite constituent mission boards. On the other hand, the MCC was not an organization delegated to carry on an evangelistic program. The only alternatives left on the question of using the chapel as a community church were either to invite a pastor from one of the constituent groups to become associated with the project, who also might baptize members into his constituent group, or to refuse to accept candidates for church membership. A definite decision was not made on the question until about a year later when a pastor was appointed by the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities to organize a church at La Plata.

In June, 1945, the MCC negotiated the purchase of a small plot of land from PRRA for the use of a chapel building. Following the purchase of the land a committee, consisting of Dr. George D. Troyer, Carl Lehman, and Ervin Warkentin, was appointed to proceed with the plans toward the construction of the chapel building. An experienced car-

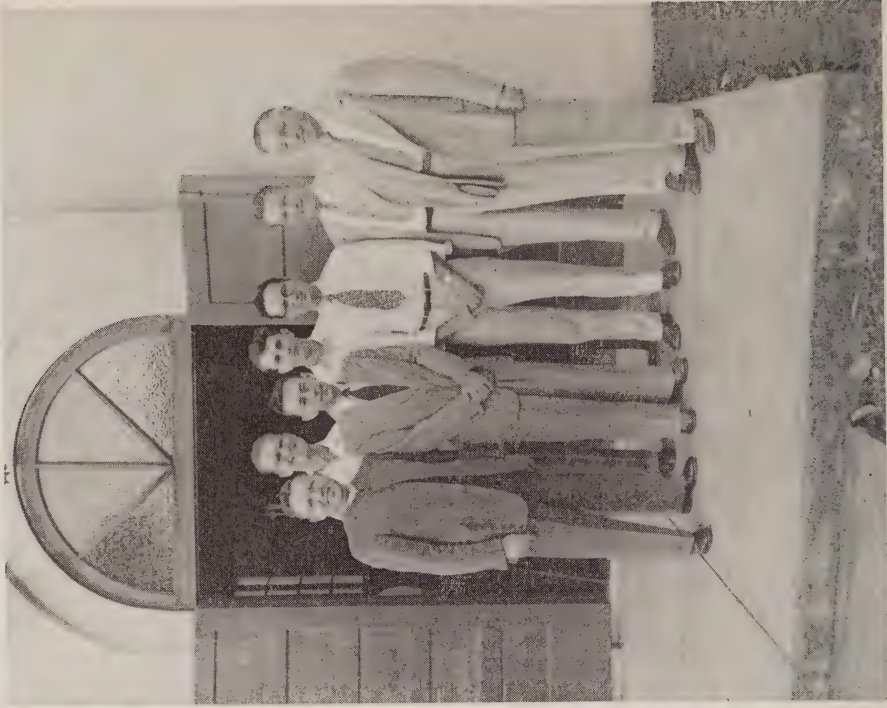




All of the American Mennonite workers in Puerto Rico, January, 1951.



The Mennonite service unit, June, 1951.



L. to R.; Levi C. Hartzler, Paul Lauver, Justus Holsinger, Dr. Fred Swartzendruber, Dr. Walter Massanari, Stanley Miller, E. C. Bender.

penter from the States to direct the construction was requested. Joe Brunk, of Goshen, Indiana, was appointed for a six-month term to direct the construction.

The ground-breaking ceremony took place on Thanksgiving Day, 1945. The services were opened by devotions in charge of Dr. Troyer, followed by remarks from unit director Harry Martens. The ground was broken by Joe Brunk, assisted by two members of the next generation—John Amstutz and Duane Lee Martens. Music was furnished by quartets from the unit. Within a matter of weeks construction was in full swing. A number of CPS men stayed in Puerto Rico beyond their release to donate time to the construction of the structure.

The La Plata Mennonite Chapel was completed March 1, 1946. The cost of construction, not including MCC labor, was \$2,034.82. The dedication of the chapel took place March 17, with J. N. Byler delivering the dedication address, translated by Paul Lauver. In his message Byler stated, "Not only are we concerned that the people have better health, but also we are concerned that the people have a place to worship. Therefore in the name of the Mennonite Central Committee we dedicate this chapel, not only for the people of the Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit, but for the people of this community. May many people meet and worship God in the days to come; may from this pulpit evangelical truth be taught to this people and may they worship God. This is the King's chapel."

Following the dedication address short speeches were given by Harry Martens, A. M. de Andino, Rufus B. King, Delbert V. Preheim, Fernando del Río, José Terrón, Harold Hilliard, C. Manley Morton, Hugh J. Williams, Pedro Rosa, and Rafael Landrón. Most of the leading denominations were represented by a minister at the dedication service. A program of choral music was given in the evening by the Masa Coral Chorus of the Polytechnic Institute of San Germán, Puerto Rico.

Immediately following the dedication of the chapel regular Sunday evening worship services were held for a year with guest pastors in charge. At first these meetings were well attended but the lack of a regular pastor made it difficult to have a coherent program. The previously organized Sunday-school classes were also continued and were now conducted in the church building.

There was great concern on the part of unit members that the chapel be used for an evangelistic program in the community. The unit unanimously recommended on July 2, 1946, that the La Plata Chapel be made available as an evangelical church home for Puerto Ricans of the community, and that the Mennonite Central Committee invite a constituent Mennonite group to establish an organized church. The unit members representing various Mennonite groups unanimously

pledged their support to any Mennonite group which might begin a church program. The Executive Committee of the MCC at its September, 1946, meeting discussed the unit recommendation and passed a resolution inviting the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities of the (old) Mennonite Church to provide a pastor at La Plata. The pastor was to be given full charge of the Spanish religious program at La Plata, and the MCC agreed to make available to him the parsonage and chapel. It was also specified that the pastor would not become the unit pastor nor have charge of the unit religious activities. The director and pastor were authorized to work out a schedule of religious activities which would mutually fit the interests of both the community and the unit religious programs.

In January, 1947, the announcement was received that Lester T. Hershey was available to become the pastor for the La Plata Church. At the MCC Executive Committee meeting of February 15, 1947, approval was given to the Mission Board appointment of Hershey to La Plata. The arrival of the Hersheys and their three children April, 1947, was received with great enthusiasm by the unit who had become somewhat impatient in their waiting for a community pastor.

#### **CALVARY MENNONITE CHURCH ORGANIZED**

The Sunday-school work which had been carried on under the direction of the unit religious committee was turned over to Lester Hershey in May, 1947. The Sunday-school activities consisted of object lessons, choruses and hymns, and memorization of Bible verses. When Hershey arrived there were only eight children attending the Sunday school, but after a few Sundays the attendance increased and the group had to be divided into two classes. One of the problems was finding teachers who could talk Spanish well enough to teach the classes. Carol Glick, a Mennonite teacher at the Barranquitas Baptist Academy, offered her teaching services.

In May, 1947, when the first invitation was given in a public service, twenty-two raised their hands as a manifestation of accepting Christ. Of these twenty-two, twelve were later baptized into church membership. Many who made a public confession of Christ did not follow through in becoming members of the church. Of fifty-eight who made a public confession during the year of 1947, twenty-seven were later baptized. In some instances those who accepted Christ were threatened or ridiculed by relatives and friends. A Bible indoctrination class was held each week which not only the converts but others as well were invited to attend.

In October, 1947, the Sunday-school period was changed from Sun-





Exterior and interior views of the Calvary Mennonite Church.



Christmas chorus of unit and Puerto Rican church members.

day afternoon to Sunday morning. It was preceded at 8:30 by the Spanish sermon. After the Sunday school, an English sermon was given, primarily for the continental workers.

The first co-superintendents of the Sunday school were Clayton Gingerich and Melquiades Santiago. Gingerich, who had a background of Sunday-school training and experience, was a help to Santiago who had no previous experience in Sunday-school work. Other Puerto Rican young people who were elected to Sunday-school offices, likewise lacked experience for the positions. Members of the unit also helped in the Sunday-school program as they gained command of the Spanish language.

On October 12, 1947, the first baptism took place in the Calvary Mennonite Church at La Plata. Seven were baptized into church membership, of whom five were men. Two of these were married men and heads of families, who later led their wives to Christ. Of the remaining five, one girl married a unit member, another later attended a Mennonite college in the States, one of the young men graduated from Barranquitas Baptist Academy, and another married a more recent convert and established a Christian home and has taken an active part in the church program. All seven of these converts have taken a vital interest in the church program, and all have accepted responsible positions in the Calvary Mennonite Church. Bringing these young people to Christ resulted from the efforts of both unit and mission workers. This fact is indicated in an editorial appearing in the *Rio La Plata*.

"On the twelfth of October our first group of converts, seven in number, were baptized. Let us look at this group. Three are men about thirty-five years old. They are all working on our farm and have been in close contact with our two farm men. Two of the group are fellows that work in the kitchen. Here again they have been under the influence of unit members. Of the two girls, one is a nurse-aide in the hospital. The other lived and worked in the store next to the hospital and was always a favorite of the unit. For some time she has lived with the Ehrets in Aibonito. Then, with one exception, all are unit employees, and the one exception lives with a Mennonite family."

The various activities of the Calvary Mennonite Church indicate that an aggressive evangelistic program was in progress during the first year following the organization of the church. The Labor Day Songfest was held in September, 1947, with neighboring congregations participating. About 350 voices joined together in praise as the program was broadcast to the community over loud-speakers. A missionary meeting was held with Louis Lehman, Johannesburg, South Africa, as speaker. The first Bible Institute was held during October, November, and December, followed by a Bible Conference also held in December. The

Easter Sunrise Service was conducted on the top of a high hill overlooking the La Plata Valley. The message of the guest speaker, Aaron Webber, and the music from the combined American-Puerto Rican chorus were carried to the homes of the valley by loud-speakers. The Mother's Day program was attended by an overflow crowd. The second summer Bible school was well attended with an average attendance of 132. The final evening program of the school was attended by approximately 300 people.

The regular weekly meetings of the congregation included: Sunday morning worship service, Sunday school, Sunday evening prayer meeting and evangelistic service, Monday night Bible study, and Friday night Christian Endeavor directed by the congregation. Another activity of the church was the Sunday afternoon home visitation. Unit members and members of the congregation met at the church early Sunday afternoon to make a report in the visitation of the previous week and receive their visitation assignments from the pastor. After the reading of a Scripture and prayer they left for the homes.

During the year the men of the congregation manifested a spirit of Christian love when they joined together to plow the field of a Christian widow and plant it in corn, beans, soybeans, and sweet potatoes.

An effort was made to teach the members of the congregation their Christian responsibility in giving. Through their church offerings (which included unit contributions) they were able to pay for their Sunday-school supplies, summer Bible school expenses, expenses incurred by guest speakers for special occasions, and the monthly rent on the Rabanal house used for religious services.

By the end of the first year of the organized church, twenty-five persons had been baptized into church membership. The average Sunday-school attendance was fifty-nine. During the year a benevolence fund was established for the purpose of helping needy members of the congregation. The fund was administered by the church council, and one offering each month was placed in the fund. The church council had been organized for the purpose of counseling with the pastor on matters pertaining to the work of the church.

Other important activities growing out of the church program during the year were *La Vox del Calvario* (*Voice of Calvary*), a weekly radio broadcast, the beginning of an outstation mission at Rabanal, and a Sunday-school class in the Salto community.

One of the outstanding events of the second year of the organized church was the first conference of the Mennonite Church of Puerto Rico, held at La Plata, March, 1949. The conference was attended by people from La Plata, Pulguillas, Rabanal, and Palo Hincado. The purpose of



the conference was to inform the church members of the progress of the church work, to inspire them to go forward in the work of the Lord, to encourage the young people to work more for the Lord, and to give everyone a vision of the possibilities of the work of the Mennonite Church in Puerto Rico. The program of the conference included addresses on the following subjects: History of the Mennonite Church; Organization of the Mennonite Church; The Mission Work of the Mennonite Church in the Cities of the Continent, in Foreign Fields, and in Rural Areas of the Continent. One of the main features of the conference was the youth session in which young members of the church gave testimonies of Christian living. The guest speaker of the conference was Alberto Espada Matta, of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church of Puerto Rico.

When Lester and Alta Hershey and family left for furlough April, 1949, they were replaced by Wilbur and Grace Nachtigall, who had charge of the church at La Plata during the summer months. In October the Nachtigalls went to Palo Hincado and Paul and Lois Lauver took charge of the church at La Plata with the Hersheys moving to Pulguillas. John and Bonita Driver were under appointment, July 1, 1951, to replace the Lauvers who were to leave for furlough in September.

Another activity added to the church program in 1949 was the organization of a women's meeting by Mrs. T. K. Hershey. The women met each week for a period of fellowship and devotions. They were also given occasional talks on personal hygiene, prenatal care, care of babies, and foods and nutrition. Occasionally periods were set aside for making and repairing baby clothing and other articles.

Two of the main features of the church program during the summer months of 1949 were the summer Bible school and the first Mennonite boys' camp. The Bible school was conducted for a period of two weeks with an average attendance of 173. Each class was taught by two teachers, a continental worker assisted by one of the young Puerto Rican Christians. The boys' camp was the first Mennonite camp, since the camps of previous years were operated in co-operation with the Castañer and Zalduondo units. Both of these activities were conducted in co-operation with the service program, with personnel from the mission and service programs working together. During the third year of the Calvary Mennonite Church, in addition to its regular activities, the congregation began a Sunday school and worship service in the Peñón community, located several miles from La Plata. At first the services were conducted in a home but later a landowner gave permission to use a house located on his farm. One of the young men of the La Plata congregation assisted the pastor in the responsibility of the Peñón work.

Three series of evangelistic meetings were held during the third



The summer Bible schools have given many children their first knowledge of the Bible. Here children study, work, and play together.

year of the church, with a high degree of interest manifested by the large crowds attending and the large number who made public confessions. Early in 1950 a children's Bible club was started under the direction of Mrs. Fred Swartzendruber. The children of the community showed much interest in these weekly Bible classes. The attendance increased to the point where the club was divided into two groups. The children elected their own officers for the club.

The records of the Calvary Mennonite Church, January, 1951, show a membership of fifty-nine. The average Sunday-school attendance for the year of 1950 was eighty-one. The total church and Sunday-school offerings for the year totaled over eight hundred dollars.

### **PROGRAM OF EVANGELISM AT PULGUILLAS**

S. C. Yoder, president of the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, visited Puerto Rico in 1945 to study the possibilities of beginning evangelistic work. The Mennonites had previously formed an acquaintance with Don Antonio Emanuelli, a large landowner at Pulguillas, through the MCC clinics conducted in the Pulguillas Department of Health dispensary in the early months of 1945. Emanuelli offered to donate a ten-acre tract of land to the Mission Board if they would provide medical service to the community. Yoder recommended that the first evangelistic program sponsored by the Mission Board be started at Pulguillas on the land donated by Emanuelli. The evangelistic work at Pulguillas was begun by Paul and Lois Lauver, who arrived in Puerto Rico, December, 1945. The Lauvers were the first missionaries appointed to Puerto Rico by the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. A kindred relationship existed between the Pulguillas station and the La Plata Mennonite Project, since the mission program owed its beginning to the MCC service program. Dr. George D. Troyer, who continued with the MCC service program at La Plata, was selected as the official Board representative in Puerto Rico.

In January, 1946, Joe E. Brunk began the construction of a concrete house for the Lauvers and a frame cottage to accommodate another family. Two garages were built and in the late spring a Sunday school was started in the larger of the two. The Sunday-school attendance soon grew to around 120, and the garage building would no longer take care of all the people. A tabernacle building was constructed large enough to accommodate 200 people.

This church building was dedicated August 25, 1946, with S. C. Yoder in charge of the services. Following the dedication service the first five persons were baptized into church membership. Converts were received into church membership several times during 1947, and by



July, 1948, the Pulguillas congregation had a membership of thirty-one Puerto Ricans.

These thirty-one members were nearly all young single people. The apparent reason for this was that so many parents lived together without having been legally married. Some of these were hindered from becoming members of the church because they were living with one companion and had another companion elsewhere.

The Sunday school at Pulguillas has always had good attendance. A high attendance mark was reached on Mother's Day, 1948, when 167 children and adults were present. The average attendance for the church year ending June 1, 1948, was ninety-seven. Considering that most of the people attending Sunday school were poor, the offerings were good, with a total contribution of \$393.95 (including mission personnel contributions) for the period of a year.

The first summer Bible school at Pulguillas was held in June, 1947. The average attendance was eighty-six. A number of Puerto Rican members assisted the continental teachers. The Pulguillas and La Plata schools co-operated in exchanging teachers. The Bible school was climaxed with a well attended final program held the last evening.

The schedule of daily activities indicated that an aggressive program was in operation at Pulguillas. Every other Monday evening a group of young people of the congregation accompanied the pastor to "Los Mangos." After a forty-five minute walk they conducted a service in a small poorly-lit room of one of the homes. The attendance at these meetings was around twenty-five or thirty.

Tuesday afternoon was the time set aside for the women's meeting. These meetings were organized in 1947 by Mrs. George D. Troyer with around twenty or thirty women attending. The meetings were later attended by forty or fifty women. Once each month they sewed quilts, baby blankets, and other children's clothing. In addition to the discussion of devotional subjects, and sewing, such practical subjects, as health, home sanitation, care of the teeth, and care of babies, were discussed. Bible teaching was the first emphasis of the program, with the pastors of the Mennonite churches frequently giving evangelistic messages. These women's meetings were the only services of the entire church program attended by some of the women of the community. A number began attending the church services after regularly attending the women's meetings.

Donations in clothing, sent from the States, were distributed through the organization. Many of the families who did not have proper clothes were able to secure them in this manner. A small fee was charged for each item of clothing and if the mother could not pay the fee members of the family were given jobs around the mission homes.

Wednesday evening was the time for Bible study and a class for converts in preparation for church membership. A cottage prayer meeting conducted in English was held on Thursday evening. Friday evening was reserved for young people's Bible-study meeting. This meeting was conducted largely by the Puerto Rican young people.

Saturday evenings were reserved for a young people's social. The young people gathered together to play games, study the Bible, and learn verses. One of the features of these socials was a trip to the beach, which was the first time some had been more than a few miles from home. Following a social afternoon T. K. Hershey gave an inspirational talk, after which each member of the church accepted the challenge to lead his family to Christ. Through these socials many young people were drawn closer to the church.

The Sunday schedule included the Sunday-school hour and worship service in the morning and a home visitation program in the afternoon. The group of young people met with the pastor, who read the Scripture that was used in the visitation. They were divided into four or five small groups, each having a leader. As the groups assembled at the respective homes, they engaged in singing and Scripture reading. Through the visitation program from seventy to ninety people heard the Bible read each Sunday. The Sunday evening meetings consisted of a children's meeting followed by an evangelistic service.

The extensive building program begun at Pulguillas by Joe Brunk was completed under the direction of Elmer Springer. Three large hurricane-proof concrete residences and two frame cottages were constructed to house mission personnel. The tabernacle-church building and a two-room clinic and milk station building were also constructed. Lawns were made by hauling sod from the hills, and sidewalks were laid, making it possible to go from house to house without getting in the red mud. The biggest single construction project was the building of the hurricane-proof cement-block church building completed in 1949. John Hertzler, Pennsylvania, came to Puerto Rico to help on the construction. The benches and pulpit were made in the Pulguillas workshop from rough native hardwood. The church was ready for use, September, 1949.

"Sunday, September 4, 1949, became a day long to be remembered by the missionary group as well as the entire congregation at the Pulguillas mission station near Aibonito, Puerto Rico. On this date the new church building was dedicated in an afternoon service. The church was filled with local community people as well as groups from the churches of the surrounding towns.

"Bishop J. A. Heiser of Fisher, Illinois, preached the message of the afternoon. Mr. and Mrs. Heiser made the journey to the island for the purpose of being present at the dedication service. A number of mem-

bers of Bishop Heiser's congregation at Fisher, Illinois, have been serving as missionaries in Puerto Rico. Also in the afternoon program an octet from the La Plata congregation sang several numbers.

"The building had been in construction for seven months under the direction of Elmer Springer and workers from the community. Most of those helping in the construction are converts or members of the congregation. The building . . . will accommodate a capacity crowd of three hundred people. Up to this time no permanent building had been made for worship services and much appreciation and thanksgiving are expressed by everyone for this wonderful place of worship."

During the summer of 1948, Beulah Litwiller, a newly assigned missionary, began preparation for the opening of a mission school at Pulguillas. The tabernacle-church building was walled in, and tables, benches, blackboards, and teachers' desks were made by the local carpenters. The Pulguillas Christian Day School was opened August 16, 1948, with an attendance of twenty-eight pupils, eighteen in the first grade and ten in the second. Several weeks previous to the opening of the school, the teachers, Beulah Litwiller and Mrs. Elmer Springer, went from home to home selecting those children whom they felt would be an asset to the school. Most of the children selected were already attending Sunday school, and were children of parents in sympathy with the church program. Each child was required to pay a tuition fee of three dollars a year. This fee did not cover the costs of instruction but it helped the parents to value and appreciate the school facilities.

In addition to meeting the three hours of recitation required by the Department of Education, the school offered a half hour of religious education each day. The religious instruction included Bible stories and choruses. An inspector from the Department of Education visited the school in January, 1949. He was well pleased with the work and recommended recognition of the school by the Department of Education.

At the end of the first year it was felt more than ever that the school program was an essential part of the total mission program. A day school is one of the most effective ways of building a strong church community, and a strong church community is essential to a successful mission program. Having the children under Christian teachers each day of the week and again in Sunday school makes it possible to teach them many principles of community living. Honesty, dependability, and the ability to play together and co-operate in group activities are so often noticeably lacking among the children. In the absence of strong Christian homes a Christian day school supplies a big need in building character.

The plan has been to add a grade each year to the school. Accordingly, the third grade was added in 1949, the fourth grade in 1950, and



the fifth grade is to be added this coming school year of 1951. The first two grades have met in the mornings with the third and fourth grades meeting in the afternoon. Additional teachers were added as needed each year.

With the completion of the new church building in September, 1949, the old building was used exclusively for the school. Forty-four children were enrolled during the second school year and fifty-six during the third. The influence of daily Christian teaching on these young lives cannot now be properly evaluated. The seeds of Truth sown each day in the hearts of young children will bear fruit as these boys and girls grow to mature men and women and assume the responsibilities of church and community leadership.

The medical and dental clinics have been an important part of the Pulguillas program. During the year of 1949, 1,019 patients were treated in the medical clinic conducted by Dr. Troyer assisted by Marie Yoder. This figure does not include the numerous home calls. The cases taken care of in the clinic included colds, flu, injuries, leg ulcers, infections, and simple surgery. Many births in the homes were also attended by the Pulguillas medical personnel. The dental clinics were in charge of Dr. Earl Stover who came one day each week. Only extractions were taken care of in the clinic and those needing additional dental care were referred to the office of Dr. Stover in Aibonito.

Another interesting and important work performed by mission personnel, though it has never been recorded and written up as an actual part of the mission program, was the eye clinics of Dr. Troyer and the lens-grinding establishment of Nortell Troyer. Each year hundreds of pairs of glasses have been made in the lens-grinding shop and fitted in the office of Dr. Troyer. People from all over the island come to Pulguillas to have their eyes taken care of. Those needing eye surgery are taken care of by Dr. Troyer in the Mennonite General Hospital, La Plata, where he also has several other eye clinics each week.

Another significant part of the Pulguillas program was the milk station. The following is a description of the station by the one in charge: "Our milk-station work . . . is a little over a year old. No accurate record of this work was kept until October, 1947. However, with the aid of the reports which we are now keeping, it is estimated that during the past year we have distributed over 13,000 quarts of milk, which means that we gave milk to an average of thirty families every day. We sold milk, for which we paid fourteen cents a quart, for five cents a quart. That means that someone else had to pay for the difference. We are grateful to the Mission Board and to various friends and Sunday-school classes at home for their donations which made this work possible.

“Many children and mothers came for long distances to get their milk every day. Many of them had to go over steep mountain paths which took them a good hour. Each day before any milk was dispensed, everyone receiving milk was required to be present for a devotional period of songs, Bible reading, and prayer. We feel that this was one method of getting God’s Word to people and into homes which we could not have reached in any other way.”

During the year of 1950, the church at Pulguillas was named the Bethany Mennonite Church. In addition to the regular activities week-end conferences were held quarterly, the second Annual Conference of the Mennonite Church in Puerto Rico, and the beginning of evangelistic work at Coamo Arriba. The week-end conferences centered around certain topical discussions such as victorious living, Christian stewardship, and missions. The congregation profited much from the week-end conference on Christian stewardship. An increase in offerings was noticeable following this conference. Tithing and offerings were taught as a part of worship. Some of the Christians have accepted this as a part of their worship and were blessed through their unselfish giving. During the year the Bethany congregation contributed to the building fund of the Chicago mission, the summer work among Puerto Rican immigrant workers in Pennsylvania, Mennonite mission work among Puerto Ricans in New York City, and mission work in China. The congregation has also contributed regularly to the radio program. The expenses involved in the work at Coamo Arriba not taken care of locally were underwritten by the Bethany Church.

The Bethany Mennonite Church was host to the other Mennonite congregations at the second Annual Conference of the Mennonite Church of Puerto Rico. The services were well attended with as high as 300 attending the night sessions. The conference program centered around the subject of prayer. One of the important features was the young people’s session in which some of the young Christians gave challenging talks.

The unusual way in which the evangelistic program was begun at Coamo Arriba can best be pictured by the Pulguillas pastor.

“If you understand Spanish, you will wonder as we did, why we say Coamo ‘Arriba’ (up), when it really is Coamo ‘Abajo’ (down), for we go down, down, down—a sudden descent of perhaps 800 feet to get there. You see, Coamo Arriba is a community strung out along a creek snuggled between high mountains on either side. It is ‘up’ from the city of Coamo, but ‘down’ from Pulguillas.

“One day I started out on my horse to distribute ‘Heraldos.’ I had heard about a community that was called Coamo Arriba. It was hard to reach because there wasn’t any road leading into the community. One

could go in on either horse or foot. Most people I talked to didn't recommend the descent on horse. It was steep and the path was narrow, and even dangerous at places. We found much of what they said to be true, but never quite so hair-raising.

"Going from house to house, we found it easy to chat with most of the people. They readily accepted the tracts. Upon asking them if they had ever attended an evangelical meeting or knew anything about the Gospel story, a few understood what we meant. The community wasn't really Catholic, even though there was an old much-repaired church standing in the middle of the community. The priest was supposed to come once a month, but due to the terrible paths during the rains, he wasn't very regular.

"At one of the homes, we found a young man who seemed very much interested in the Gospel. Jorge Santiago had lived in Coamo for a year. At that time he had attended the Baptist church with his sister who was a member. He told us of a man, who, about twenty years before, had visited the community for about a year preaching in his home and a few others once a week. His deceased mother had enjoyed the Gospel so much. A few weeks later we again visited Jorge's home. We approached him concerning holding a meeting in his home. He was interested. We set the date for Sunday afternoon, March 5. At this meeting, there was a total of nine adults and ten children present. Three of our members from Bethany accompanied me. All three took part in the service. I closed with a flannelgraph story of Elijah and the idol worshipers. All present were very much interested and invited us to come back again. So, in two weeks we returned. Since then, we have been going every week.

"Last June we asked the people if they would be interested in our holding a summer Bible school. They were, and secured us a house in which to hold the school. For two weeks, Melquiades Santiago of La Plata and I lived in this house, eating at a home of an interested family. The 40.9 average attendance showed their interest. Everything was new to them. Every morning Mrs. Hershey and José Delgado of Pulguillas rode down the mountain to help us as teachers. The people were much impressed with their boldness in riding down the steep path with apparently no fear. Each afternoon we visited the homes of the community. Each evening we held a service in a different home. The attendance at these meetings ranged from twenty-two to eighty-six. The summer Bible school program was held in a larger house with 115 in attendance. The school was a success in every way. We learned to know the people and children well, and we had won their confidence.

"In the previous May we had seen the need of song books. We approached the people on the purchase of song books. They wanted to



own their own, rather than have Bethany buy them for them. So, each Sunday afterwards, an offering was lifted for song books. They now have forty of their own. After summer Bible school, they were interested in renting a house to continue holding services. They are paying the five dollars rent per month. Each first Sunday of the month they are giving an offering to the Radio Committee as are the other churches. Souls have been saved.

"We thank the Lord for the nineteen souls who are eagerly looking forward to being baptized after proper instruction. We have what we think is the beginning of an indigenous church. We are hoping and praying that what one man said will be true. He said, 'We want you to help us establish a work that will go on even if it should happen that you can't come down any more.' We pray the Lord will grant this man's petition. Pray with us to this end."

The report ending January 1, 1951, shows that the total Puerto Rican membership of the Bethany congregation was fifty-eight. The average Sunday-school attendance for the year was 133.5, with a total church and Sunday-school offering of \$893.89. The average Sunday-school attendance at Coamo Arriba was thirty-five.

The continental mission personnel at Pulguillas, as of January 1951, were Lester and Alta Hershey, George and Kathryn Troyer, Elmer and Clara Springer, Beulah Litwiller, Marie Yoder, Nortell and Elda K. Troyer, and Anna K. Massanari. During a six-month period of 1948 when the Lauvers were on furlough in the States, T. K. Hershey was the acting pastor of the congregation. In October, 1949, Lester Hershey became the pastor of the Bethany Church with Paul Lauver taking over the pastoral work of the Calvary congregation at La Plata. In the year of 1947, Linda Reimer and Marjorie Shantz worked at Pulguillas following the completion of their term with MCC at La Plata. As of July 1, 1951, Carol Glick and Gladys Witmer were under appointment to teach in the school at Pulguillas.

## **SPREADING THE GOSPEL TO THE HILLS OF RABANAL**

In the fall of 1947, when Lester T. Hershey was looking for a horse to use in his visitation work, he decided to try one out on a steep trail, leading to Rabanal of the Cidra municipality. While riding over the mountains in the vicinity of Rabanal he was deeply impressed with the scenic beauty of the great fields of sugar cane on top of the mountain. Something seemed to tell him that this was the place for a new preaching point and that some day there would be a Mennonite Church in the Rabanal area.

While Hershey was drinking coffee in one of the homes of the

Rabanal community at a later date, someone asked him why he did not preach in their community. The manager of the large farm occupying most of Rabanal was contacted and he promised to help in finding a house to be used for religious services. A house was secured but opposition to beginning Protestant services in the community caused the farm manager to change his mind, with the excuse that the brother of the owner of the house was getting married and needed it. When Hershey learned that the owner's brother had no intentions of marrying in the near future, he was able to secure the house for services, through careful diplomatic negotiations with all concerned.

After the house was secured a meeting was scheduled for the last Saturday of September at four o'clock in the afternoon. It was publicized by driving over the mountain sugar-cane roads playing hymns from records through the microphone of a loud-speaker. At four o'clock a few children and a man came. The man informed the pastor that four o'clock was their supper-time, and not a good time for a religious service. Another service was scheduled at a later hour for the following Saturday evening, October 4, 1947. About fifteen men and a few children were present at this first Mennonite service held at Rabanal.

Each Saturday evening the La Plata pastor rode his horse up the narrow winding path, some of which was along a deep precipice, to take the Gospel to the people at Rabanal. There were times when the trip was made in downpours of rain and he was soaked to the bone. There were times when the river was high and it was dangerous to cross with a horse. These sacrifices on the part of the pastor to teach the people the Word of God made an impression upon them. These services were used as a valuable training ground for some of the young Christians of the La Plata congregation. Frequently they accompanied the pastor and assisted him in the service.

When a group of Mennonite people from Morgantown, Pennsylvania, visited Puerto Rico in February, 1948, they showed an interest in the Rabanal work and suggested that a church building be built there. They promised to back the construction of a church building financially. Accordingly, land was donated by a wealthy landowner and a small concrete-block building was erected by the Pulguillas construction crew.

On October 3, 1948, one year after the beginning of services at Rabanal, the Good Shepherd Mennonite Church was dedicated. A week of evangelistic meetings followed the dedication service and each evening the sermon was transmitted over the loud-speakers. Though there was good response on the part of some, there was considerable opposition on the part of others to having a Mennonite Church in Rabanal. On one occasion sand was thrown in the windows of the pastor's car when he left the evening service. Another time a pile of small stones was put

in the road to obstruct the way, and one time a road grader was placed across the road making it necessary to take a much rougher road home. There were also reports that the Mennonites had buried the cross under the cement porch of the chapel, and that everyone entering had to step on it. Interestingly enough, some of those who were at first hostile to the Mennonite work, later became close friends of the missionary workers.

Since the Rabanal evangelistic program was actually sponsored by the Calvary Mennonite congregation at La Plata, the church council approved the appointment of workers to help in the work. Melquiades Santiago and Ángel Rivera from La Plata took turns at preaching on Sunday mornings, with the La Plata pastor preaching one Sunday morning each month.

Linda Reimer and Marjorie Shantz returned to Puerto Rico in the fall of 1948 as mission workers. They lived in La Plata and following a period of Spanish study devoted most of their time to the Rabanal field. Both were nurses who had previously worked in the Mennonite General Hospital and later at Pulguillas. After the building of a small clinic building these girls spent every other week at Rabanal where most of their time was taken up with Sunday-school and church activities, women's meetings, children's meetings, and midwifery practice in the community. Gladys Widmer was scheduled to arrive August, 1951, to replace Linda Reimer while she was on furlough.

The first ten believers were received into church membership March, 1949, forming the nucleus of the new church. The good attendance at church services and Sunday school during the first year showed that a number of people were interested in the activities. The average attendance for Sunday morning service was fifty-three, and the Sunday-school attendance ranged from seventy to eighty, depending on the weather conditions. At Rabanal there are heavy rains, especially during the cool winter months, making it almost impossible for some to get to church over the muddy steep trails. The La Plata pastor continued to preach one Sunday morning each month and each Wednesday evening, the evening service having been changed from Saturday to Wednesday.

In March, 1949, bi-weekly clinics were started under the direction of the La Plata unit doctor assisted by the two mission nurses. The doctor went up by horse to conduct the clinic following his morning of operations at the hospital. At first only a few attended the clinics but soon the number mounted to about sixty. Patients needing hospitalization or X rays were referred to La Plata. In addition to the clinic service the two missionary nurses were frequently called to the homes to give medical care, especially to attend deliveries. This medical aid helped greatly in gaining the confidence and friendship of the people. Minister-



ing to the medical needs of the people in the spirit of love proved to be a common language.

Children's meetings were begun during 1949, with fifty or sixty children attending. Some children attended these meetings who did not attend Sunday school. Long before the time for the meeting to begin the children gathered at the church door awaiting the ringing of the bell which permitted them to enter. Many of these children were retarded because the public school facilities in the Rabanal community were very poor. The only grade being taught in the community was the second, with the children attending only half a day.

In April, 1949, a women's meeting was organized, and held every other Monday afternoon. Many of the women came directly from the fields, taking off an hour and a half from their work to attend the meetings. Besides devotional talks and flannelgraph stories, talks were given on personal hygiene, prenatal care, care of babies, and nutrition. Every third meeting was spent in sewing. Many women who did not attend other church services attended the women's meetings.

The first Bible school was held in the summer of 1949, with an average attendance of eighty-three children. Before the school was opened the homes were visited for the purpose of enrolling the children. During the last week of school evangelistic meetings were held each evening. In order to take care of all the children classes were held in the church, garage, a tent, and a neighbor's garage some distance from the church.

The children of the community, having almost no recreational facilities, were frequently tempted to engage in gambling promoted by older persons. This situation called for the organizing of a wholesome recreational program for the young people. A young people's meeting was scheduled every two weeks, in which they enjoyed organized games along with a period of devotions.

In the fall of 1950 a kindergarten was begun at Rabanal. Marjorie Shantz and Linda Reimer conducted the kindergarten every other week. Approximately twenty children were enrolled in the school. Children were accepted who had never entered school and their ages ranged from four to nine years. Some of the children came from as far as two or three miles away. They were given classes in music, Bible stories, drills in sounds, and simple arithmetic. They were also taught habits of health and cleanliness. Before their lunch they washed their hands and faces, brushed their teeth, and combed their hair. Before they began eating, heads were bowed and hands folded as they gave thanks together for the food. In addition to their other classes they were given a short period of English word study.

The records ending the year 1950 showed a church membership of

fifteen, an average Sunday-school attendance of seventy-three, and an average summer Bible school attendance of 114.

The Rabanal community is somewhat different from the other mission communities, probably because of the secluded life the people live back in the hills. They are very simple folk. Many go barefooted, even to church. They are very suspicious and one must gain their confidence before he can be successful in working with them. They are also very superstitious. Some time ago a man was killed in a house not far from the church. The house was immediately vacated and torn down, and a cross was erected where he fell. There was no church in the region until the Mennonite Church was built. Local residents received no medical care unless they walked to Cidra or La Plata, four or five miles away. A second grade education is the extent of one's study unless he walks to Cidra or La Plata. During rainy season the roads are impossible even by jeep. Within the past several years a government milk station was opened to supply the needy children with milk. Rabanal presents a great challenge to the Christian worker who is interested in demonstrating the love of Christ to those in need.

## **EVANGELISM AT PALO HINCADO**

In November, 1947, the executive committee of the Mennonite Church in Puerto Rico requested Lester Hershey to make a trip from Barranquitas to Orocovis for the purpose of finding a new location to begin evangelistic work. Hershey stopped at the crossroads of Palo Hincado before fording a river which crossed the road leading to Orocovis. He noticed a newly-constructed concrete structure and upon contacting the owner, who was inside, he learned that the owner was willing to sell the building though it had been built for a bakery. Hershey reported his findings to the executive committee, and one year later, November, 1948, a fifteen-day evangelistic campaign was begun in the Palo Hincado bakery building.

The evangelistic services were conducted by three ministers, T. K. Hershey, Paul Lauver, and Lester Hershey. Each night truck loads of people from the congregations at La Plata and Pulguillas attended the meetings, assisting in the singing and helping to create interest in the community. Homes of the community were visited for the purpose of inviting people to the services. These evening meetings were broadcast over the community by means of loud-speakers. The meetings closed with thirty persons making public confessions, nineteen of whom were from the Palo Hincado area.

Following the evangelistic campaign, T. K. and Mae Hershey took charge of the work. They organized a Sunday school, attended by about

thirty, and conducted Sunday evening services with about fifty present. During the months of January and February, 1949, a Bible institute was held at Palo Hincado. Classes were conducted each Tuesday and Thursday evening and were attended by young people from La Plata, Rabanal, Pulguillas, and Palo Hincado. Fifty-nine registered for the courses in Bible study and other religious subjects.

When the T. K. Hersheys left for the States, April, 1949, Wilbur and Grace Nachtigall were given pastoral charge. They lived at La Plata and drove to Palo Hincado for services, a distance of twenty miles. In April a branch Sunday school was begun at Cuchilla, a community located several miles from Palo Hincado. After serving one month at Palo Hincado, the Nachtigalls were withdrawn and assigned pastoral charge at La Plata. During the months of May to September the Sunday school and church work was carried on by Nortell and Elda Troyer, assisted by several young people from the Bethany congregation.

The Nachtigalls were reassigned to Palo Hincado and in September they moved into the bakery building, using a part of the building for living quarters and the other for Sunday-school and church services. Nachtigall attempted to contact the nineteen persons who had made confessions in the November evangelistic campaign. He found that seven had moved out of the community, and almost all the others had lost interest in the church, with several decidedly negative in their attitude toward the church. Of the nineteen persons who had made confessions, two had remained faithful in their attendance. The church activities organized during 1949 were a Sunday school, morning worship service, children's meeting, Sunday evening evangelistic meeting, and a branch Sunday school in Cuchilla.

The best response to the program of the church was found among the children and teen-age boys. Little response was found among the teen-age girls and women during the first year. According to Nachtigall, the experiences of the year of 1949 at Palo Hincado indicated that it is inadvisable to begin an evangelistic program at a new station with an evangelistic campaign unless adequate follow-up work can be provided. It was likewise felt that unless missionaries live within the community where they are conducting an evangelistic program, the work will be greatly handicapped.

In October, 1950, twelve persons united with the church, thus beginning the first organized Mennonite Church in Palo Hincado. Some of those who united with the church suffered severe persecution and opposition from friends and even members of their own families. The Sunday school experienced a decided growth in 1950. The average attendance increased from twenty-eight in 1949 to seventy-two in 1950. The highest attendance of the year was on Mother's Day with 129 present.



The third Annual Conference of the Mennonite Church in Puerto Rico was held at Palo Hincado in April, 1951. Those attending came from Rabanal, Palo Hincado, Pulguillas, La Plata, Cuchilla, Coamo Arriba, and Peñón. The purpose of the conference was to bring the members of the Mennonite congregations together in close Christian fellowship. Bishop and Mrs. T. H. Brenneman of Sarasota, Florida, were present. Brenneman and Miguel Limardo, who is counselor of Protestant students at the University of Puerto Rico, were the guest speakers of the conference.

At one time the Baptist church had an active congregation in the Cuchilla area. During the past ten years the congregation was without the services of a regular pastor, and in more recent years the work was completely abandoned, with the little chapel standing vacant. In the summer of 1949, the Bethany congregation was given permission by the Baptists to conduct a summer Bible school in the chapel for the benefit of the children of the community. In June of 1950 the Palo Hincado congregation sponsored a two-week summer Bible school in the chapel, with an average attendance of eighty-six. During the Bible school, meetings were held each evening and on the last night, Aaron Webber, general missionary of the Baptist church, and Andrés Montalve of the Baptist General Board, presented the Cuchilla area, together with the chapel and half-acre of land, to the Mennonite Church. Since that date a Sunday school, Friday night Bible study, and other meetings have been conducted in the chapel.

The present plans of the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities call for the construction of a residence for the pastor to be located in the Cuchilla community, and a small church building for the Palo Hincado congregation which is still worshipping in the rented bakery building.

## **RADIO EVANGELISM**

In August, 1947, a fifteen-minute Spanish religious radio broadcast was begun by Lester Hershey over the Ponce station. "La Voz del Calvario" (Voice of Calvary) broadcasts consisted of three-minute messages given by Lester Hershey and Paul Lauver on alternate broadcasts, and music selections by the La Plata quartet. The first programs were given on Thursday afternoons, when the speaker and singers went to Ponce to make the broadcast in person.

In February, 1948, the fifteen-minute program changed to a half-hour program, and the time of the broadcast was changed from Thursday afternoon to Sunday morning. Program recordings were made in La Plata and sent to the Ponce station.

By the end of 1950, the Voice of Calvary broadcast had been under-

written by the Calvary Hour, sponsored by William G. Detweiler of Orrville, Ohio, well-known Mennonite radio evangelist. The name was accordingly changed to "Hora del Calvario" (Calvary Hour) and the program was broadcast by four stations scattered over the island, making it possible for the radio program to be heard at almost any point in Puerto Rico. The stations carrying "Hora del Calvario" were Mayagüez, which can be heard from Santo Domingo; Caguas, covering the eastern part of the island; Ponce, on the south side of the island; and Santurce, covering the San Juan metropolitan area. In addition to these local stations, the Pan American Broadcasting Company of New York helped in securing two other outlets in foreign countries; namely, Panama City's HOXO with a radio audience of 60,000 Spanish-speaking people, and Cap Haitien, Haiti, with a smaller radio audience.

At the present time the recording is done in a small recording studio at the Bethany Church. The message is given by Lester Hershey and music furnished by the La Plata Men's quartet, Bethany Ladies' quartet, Angel Torres, student at Baptist Academy, and Esther Neufeld of the Academy staff. Nortell Troyer engineers the recording. The expenses not underwritten by the Calvary Hour, sponsored by Detweiler, are taken care of by the Mennonite congregations in Puerto Rico.

#### **THE SERVICE-EVANGELISTIC PROGRAM A DEMONSTRATION OF FAITH AND WORKS**

The words of the Apostle James are as applicable today as they were in his day. "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." The service-evangelistic program of the Mennonite Church in Puerto Rico is an attempt to meet the needs of the rural Puerto Rican people with the whole Gospel of Christ which includes both faith and works. The manner in which the two programs have supplemented each other is well described by Lois Gunden, a teacher at Goshen College, who wrote the following words after working a summer at La Plata in 1949.

"This summer has brought me the opportunity to serve in the combined programs of MCC and the Mission Board in the La Plata Valley. This experience has again focused my thinking on the fact that Christian living is a synthesis of faith and works. Christianity without service would be dead, and service without a concern for man's spiritual needs would bring no lasting help. A relief program that carries out the philosophy of serving in His name is a real Christian witness. When

relief work is of such a nature, relief workers and missionaries can effectively work hand in hand to bring more souls into the kingdom of God. That is what has been observed happening in La Plata during the months I have spent here. Two outstanding examples of such cooperation were the summer Bible school and boys' camp. In these activities, personnel from both groups worked together under the leadership of the MCC director. All who served as personnel—whether they were missionaries or relief workers—showed the same eagerness to make their contacts with the children and the youth such as to lead them to Christ. In many instances I have seen the joy with which these workers are giving themselves, considering it a privilege to be workers together with God to accomplish His purpose in the world.

“Every one of us who profess to be serving in His name has a serious responsibility, for we thereby say that we are ministering in His stead. This means the performance of each task as though He Himself were doing it. During His earthly ministry Jesus went about doing good; by His acts and His words He showed His Father's concern for men's well-being and for their reconciliation unto Him. His life was a continual and concrete revelation to those whom He served of the concept that God is love. If we as His representatives are to reflect His character we must be diligent and faithful in even the least significant details of humble tasks. Each day we must renew our purpose and remind ourselves of the high calling that is ours.”

The spiritual welfare of the rural people of Puerto Rico has been the chief concern of the service and mission personnel. This is shown in a statement by a relief worker, who had served in the Near East in World War I and in Europe in World War II, and who visited Puerto Rico several weeks in 1949.

“A visit to Puerto Rico for several weeks has impressed upon me what can be done when the spiritual side of life is kept in the foreground. This is an outgrowth of the physical relief. It may be thought of as mature Christian relief which has reached its goal, that of ministering to the needs of the soul.

“The needs of the Puerto Rican people are many. The living conditions of the poor are almost beyond description. Unsanitary conditions cause many of their diseases. Medical services rendered at the hospital and clinics are much in demand. Our work may even be improved by the use of long-term personnel, thus eliminating the necessity of continual readjustments.

“The four mission stations which have grown out of the relief effort on this island are truly lighthouses in their communities. As God's people we can do no less than support those on the field with our means and prayers.”



The witness left by the service program of conscientious objectors during the war years had its influence in promoting the Mennonite belief and practice of nonresistance. The testimony of one who worked closely with the Mennonites for three years bears out this fact.

"In the midst of the Second World War a group of North American young people came to Puerto Rico and were known as conscientious objectors. Everybody knew that they did not fight, but no one explained clearly what they meant by conscientious objection. I was interested in knowing who these people were and on several occasions I asked someone who they were and what they were doing. Some said that they were 'presos' (an unkind Spanish term for prisoner); other people said that they were in a concentration camp, while still others said that they were just people who were afraid of war. I was just like these people who knew nothing about nonresistance and the activities of these young people in La Plata.

"One night I had the opportunity to hear them talk in the Baptist Church in Coamo. They explained their philosophy of life and their activities in La Plata. That motivated me to come and see what was being done in La Plata. I not only visited them, but I talked to people in the community about them. Everyone who really knew these young people seemed happy and pleased with the help they were giving to the Puerto Rican people. I was so well impressed that for a moment I felt like staying in La Plata and working with them. This idea was so vague that a few weeks later my old ideas of going back to the university for further study came to me and I thought it was silly for me to think about going to La Plata when I had other plans that were far more important to me.

"Later I went to the university. In a meeting of the "Fraternidad de Estudiantes Evangélicos" (association of all evangelical students attending the university) we discussed the theme of war. Reverend Limardo, counselor of our group, asked the following questions: What would you do if an armed nation like Germany (who for that epoch pretended to be the most powerful nation in the world) would come and attack Puerto Rico with bombs and armed forces destroying all the most important institutions in Puerto Rico such as the churches, hospitals and schools? What would you do if a nation came to Puerto Rico and made such changes in our government which would deny us all our liberties? Will you defend Puerto Rico if something like that should happen?

"'Of course,' a lot of us shouted. 'We are not going to let them kill us. We have to attack them and defend the liberties and rights we have,' was the opinion of almost everybody. It would be foolish if we did not do something in defense. Poor Reverend Limardo was all alone in his conviction that it was better to die than to stain your hands with

blood even in defense. In spite of the fact that I thought it was a foolish idea I felt sorry that he was standing all alone in such a good purpose. Afterwards in the halls or in our rooming houses we often discussed what a ridiculous idea Limardo had because we did not understand it. . . .

"In the summer of 1948 I came to La Plata to work as a social worker. . . . Unexpectedly one day someone in La Plata talked to me about nonresistance for the first time in plain words. He talked to me of that nonresistance which is not just refusing to wear a military uniform, but that which is in the heart and has its roots in the Sermon on the Mount. While he was explaining these ideas of nonresistance, all these experiences of the past came to my mind again step by step. . . .

"Since I was a little girl I had attended church in Coamo. I had heard many preachers from all over the island talk about love, about the blood of Jesus Christ that saves, and the command to love one another, but none of that had a real meaning in my life until I heard talk about the peace which the world cannot give. The peace which only Christ can give in the hearts of the believers, that is manifested not only in times of war, but in daily life. I remember that when I came out of the church that night I wondered why our churches didn't talk directly about nonresistance. I thought it was such a pity that our churches were spending so much time talking about love without emphasizing the practicing of love in everyday living and human relations. I felt sorry for all the young people who did not have the opportunity of hearing about nonresistance. The ideas which had never impressed me enough to change my life, and which at first seemed foolish, now came to my heart giving me a new philosophy of life, and this time forever.

"The experiences which had no meaning to me were nothing but nonresistance. Why were those young people serving in La Plata instead of helping in the war? Now I knew it was because they were faithful to Christ's teachings of nonresistance. Now I understood that they were not '*presos*,' or lazy, or cowards, but they were men who had the opportunity to know the beauty of the nonresistant life. The work which they did was very helpful to the community and we are still receiving blessings from the services of the first ones who came to Puerto Rico as conscientious objectors.

"What are the results of the ones who went to fight? Misery, hunger, despair, sorrow, death, and another war. If all the young people in the world would have done what these conscientious objectors did it would make the world a much more enjoyable place in which to live. . . ."

There are many interesting testimonies given by persons who have found Christ through the service-evangelistic Mennonite program. One man who was converted at one of the mission stations testified that his first contact with the Mennonites was four or five years *previous* to his

conversion when his family received medical care at the Mennonite General Hospital. At that time he was active in political life of the municipality but did not have the happiness which he longed for. Observing these young Christian workers, he saw that they had something which he wanted. Later when he came in closer contact with Mennonite preaching he became a faithful member of the church.

Another young lad of about thirteen was converted in the summer Bible school. Following his conversion he helped to lead his mother, brother and sisters to Christ, all becoming active workers in the church program. Another father worked side by side with the service workers as a PRRA employee, before the church program was organized. At that time he was a slave to drink. The first step toward his conversion was receiving a Testament from one of the workers. He was later converted and became an active church worker.

The nobility of purpose will determine the success of the Mennonite program of service and evangelism in Puerto Rico. The basic needs of rural Puerto Rico are spiritual, economic, social, educational, and physical in nature. Any program which attempts to represent Christ to the rural people of Puerto Rico must have as its primary objective ministering to these basic needs of the people. The Mennonite Church through its evangelistic, medical, community service, and agricultural program is endeavoring to represent Christ to the rural people by ministering to their spiritual, economic, social, educational and physical needs.



## Appendixes

## APPENDIX A. PERSONNEL

### *Service Personnel of La Plata Mennonite Project*

June 1943 to June 1951

NAME	ADDRESS	DENOMINATION	TERM OF SERVICE
1. Wilbur Nachtigall	Buhler, Kansas	MB	June 1943—July 1945
2. Justus G. Holsinger	Harrisonburg, Virginia	OM	July 1943—Apr. 1946 Sept. 1948—
3. Erwin Schrag	Marion, South Dakota	GC	July 1943—Feb. 1946
4. James Hean	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	MB	Sept. 1943—Aug. 1946
5. Carl Epp	Henderson, Nebraska	GC	Sept. 1943—Mar. 1946
6. Carl Lehman	Berne, Indiana	GC	Sept. 1943—Dec. 1945
7. Delbert V. Preheim	Marion, South Dakota	GC	Sept. 1943—Apr. 1946
8. Mrs. Delbert V. Preheim	Moundridge, Kansas	GC	Sept. 1943—Apr. 1946
9. M. Paul Stucky	Moundridge, Kansas	GC	Dec. 1943—Dec. 1945
10. Ervin Warkentin	Reedley, California	MB	Dec. 1943—Feb. 1946
11. Elmer Gingerich	Hartsville, Ohio	OOA	Dec. 1943—Feb. 1946
12. Roman Gingerich	Kalona, Iowa	OM	Dec. 1943—Feb. 1945
13. Grace Kauffman (Nachtigall)	Iowa City, Iowa	OM	Jan. 1944—Dec. 1945
14. Orie Gingerich	Williamsburg, Iowa	OM	Mar. 1944—Dec. 1945
15. Richard Weaver	Goshen, Indiana	GC	Mar. 1944—June 1946
16. Albert Bohrer	Normal, Illinois	GC	Apr. 1944—Dec. 1945
17. Naomi Shank	Linville, Virginia	OM	Apr. 1944—Dec. 1945
18. Earl Maust	Bay Port, Michigan	CAM	Apr. 1944—Dec. 1945
19. Salome Fast (Holsinger)	Mountain Lake, Minnesota	GC	May 1944—Sept. 1945 Sept. 1948—
20. Marvin Dyck	Newton, Kansas	GC	July 1944—May 1946
21. Robert Ehret	Goshen, Indiana	OM	July 1944—May 1946
22. Mrs. Richard Weaver	Pennsburg, Pennsylvania	GC	July 1944—June 1946
23. Carol Glick	Sugar Creek, Ohio	OM	Aug. 1944—Aug. 1945
24. Hugh Hostetler	North Newton, Kansas	GC	Aug. 1944—June 1946
25. Roland Kaufman	Moundridge, Kansas	GC	Aug. 1944—Feb. 1946
26. Harry Weirich	Shipshewana, Indiana	OOA	Aug. 1944—Feb. 1946
27. Victor Buller	Mountain Lake, Minnesota	GC	Aug. 1944—Apr. 1946
28. Clarence Joe Unruh	Gypsum, Kansas	CGCM	Aug. 1944—Feb. 1946
29. Carol Diller	Pandora, Ohio	GC	Aug. 1944—Dec. 1945
30. Royal Snyder	Edmore, Michigan	OM	Aug. 1944—Jan. 1946 Aug. 1949—
31. Mrs. Victor Buller	Newton, Kansas	GC	Aug. 1944—Apr. 1946
32. D. Wyman Sundheimer	Walnut Creek, Ohio	OM	Aug. 1944—Feb. 1946
33. Earl Stover	Blooming Glen, Pennsylvania	OM	Aug. 1944—June 1949
34. Mrs. Earl Stover	Blooming Glen, Pennsylvania	OM	Aug. 1944—June 1947
35. Lucille Roth	Archbold, Ohio	OM	Sept. 1944—Aug. 1945
36. H. Clair Amstutz	Goshen, Indiana	OM	Oct. 1944—Aug. 1947
37. Ophia Sevits (Snyder)	Fort Wayne, Indiana	OM	Oct. 1944—Dec. 1945 Aug. 1949—
38. Mrs. Orie Gingerich	Souderton, Pennsylvania	OM	Dec. 1944—Dec. 1945
39. George D. Troyer	Fisher, Illinois	OM	Dec. 1944—
40. Mrs. G. D. Troyer	Fisher, Illinois	OM	Dec. 1944—Dec. 1945
41. Harry Martens	McPherson, Kansas	GC	Mar. 1945—Sept. 1946
42. Leroy Mann	Manheim, Pennsylvania	BC	May 1945—May 1947
43. Mrs. Harry Martens	North Newton, Kansas	GC	May 1945—Aug. 1946
44. Mrs. H. Clair Amstutz	Goshen, Indiana	OM	May 1945—Aug. 1947
45. Mrs. Carl Lehman	Sugar Creek, Ohio	OM	May 1945—Dec. 1945
46. Joe E. Brunk	Goshen, Indiana	OM	July 1945—Jan. 1946
47. Mrs. Joe E. Brunk	Goshen, Indiana	OM	July 1945—Jan. 1946
48. Pearl Kauffman	Minier, Illinois	OM	Aug. 1945—Aug. 1950
49. Annabelle Troyer (Greaser)	Goshen, Indiana	OM	Aug. 1945—Jan. 1947
50. John Driver	Hesston, Kansas	OM	Nov. 1945—July 1948
51. Edna Peters	North Newton, Kansas	GC	Dec. 1945—June 1947
52. Delos Tanner	Francesville, Indiana	M	Dec. 1945—Dec. 1946
53. James Rinner	Mt. Pleasant, Iowa	GC	Dec. 1945—Dec. 1946
54. Paul Leatherman	Doylestown, Pennsylvania	OM	Dec. 1945—Nov. 1948
55. Marjorie Shantz	Preston, Ontario	OM	Dec. 1945—Dec. 1946
56. Linda Reimer	Steinbach, Manitoba	EMB	Dec. 1945—Dec. 1946
57. Oswald Goering	Elyria, Kansas	GC	Jan. 1946—Jan. 1947
58. Glenn Jantz	Hesston, Kansas	CGCM	Jan. 1946—Jan. 1947

59. Melvin Lauver	Akron, Pennsylvania	OM	Jan. 1946—Sept. 1948
60. Mrs. Melvin Lauver	Akron, Pennsylvania	OM	Jan. 1946—Sept. 1948
61. Lawrence Greaser	Hesston, Kansas	OM	Jan. 1946—Jan. 1947
62. John Martin	Columbiana, Ohio	OM	Jan. 1946—Jan. 1947
63. Joyce Hower	Goshen, Indiana	MBC	Jan. 1946—Aug. 1947
64. Weldon Martin	Harrisonburg, Virginia	OM	Feb. 1946—Feb. 1947
65. Arthur Thiessen	Champa, C.P., India	GC	Feb. 1946—Feb. 1947
66. Nelson Hostetter	Grantham, Pennsylvania	BC	Feb. 1946—May 1947
67. Arthur Torkelson	Everest, Kansas	OM	Feb. 1946—Mar. 1947
68. Warren Metzler	Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania	OM	Feb. 1946—Apr. 1947
69. Mrs. Warren Metzler	Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania	OM	Feb. 1946—Apr. 1947
70. Mervin Nafziger	Nampa, Idaho	OM	Mar. 1946—May 1947
71. Ira Good	Elida, Ohio	OM	Mar. 1946—May 1947
72. Mrs. Ellwyn Hartzler	Berne, Indiana	GC	Mar. 1946—Dec. 1947
73. Esther Miller (Hostetter)	Urbana, Ohio	OM	May 1946—May 1947
74. Mrs. Paul Leatherman	Minier, Illinois	OM	May 1946—Nov. 1948
75. Paul Tieszen	Marion, South Dakota	OM	June 1946—Oct. 1947
76. Ellwyn Hartzler	Bloomington, Illinois	GC	July 1946—Dec. 1947
77. Clayton Gingerich	Williamsburg, Iowa	OM	July 1946—Jan. 1948
78. Eugene van der Smissen	Buhler, Kansas	GC	July 1946—Jan. 1948
79. Kenneth Schmidt	Sheldon, Missouri	GC	Aug. 1946—July 1947
80. Eldo Neufeld	Inman, Kansas	GC	Oct. 1946—Apr. 1948
81. Moses Beachy	Kalona, Iowa	OOA	Oct. 1946—May 1948
82. George Potter	Massena, New York	M	Oct. 1946—Apr. 1948
83. Leo Swartzendruber	Wellman, Iowa	OM	Oct. 1946—Apr. 1948
84. Mrs. Leo Swartzendruber	Wellman, Iowa	OM	Oct. 1946—Apr. 1948
85. William Gibboney	Pleasantville, Ohio	BC	Dec. 1946—May 1948
86. Mrs. John Driver	Alpha, Minnesota	OM	Jan. 1947—July 1948
87. Henry Harder	Didsbury, Alberta	OM	Feb. 1947—July 1948
88. Linnie Peachey	Belleville, Pennsylvania	OM	Mar. 1947—Oct. 1948
89. Luke Birky	Salem, Oregon	OM	Mar. 1947—June 1950
90. Mrs. Luke Birky	Tangent, Oregon	OM	Oct. 1950—
91. Perry Miller	Partridge, Kansas	OOA	Mar. 1947—July 1950
92. Louise Deckert	Pawnee Rock, Kansas	GC	May 1947—Nov. 1949
93. Horace Martin	Terre Hill, Pennsylvania	OM	June 1947—Dec. 1948
94. Ralph Goering	Newton, Kansas	GC	June 1947—Dec. 1948
95. Willard Good	Rantoul, Illinois	OM	June 1947—Sept. 1950
96. Mrs. Willard Good	Delavan, Illinois	OM	June 1947—Sept. 1950
97. Charles Hertzler	Broadway, Virginia	OM	June 1947—Apr. 1949
98. Mrs. Charles Hertzler	Broadway, Virginia	OM	June 1947—Apr. 1949
99. Eleanor Weaver	Goshen, Indiana	GC	July 1947—Mar. 1949
100. Esther Lehman	Aberdeen, Idaho	GC	July 1947—Jan. 1949
101. Orpha Leatherman	Danboro, Pennsylvania	OM	Aug. 1947—Dec. 1950
102. Isaac Frederick	Bristol, Pennsylvania	OM	Oct. 1947—Apr. 1949
103. Howard Landis	Sterling, Illinois	OM	Jan. 1948—Aug. 1949
104. Emma Showalter	Broadway, Virginia	OM	June 1948—
105. Lydia Esther Santiago	Coamo, P.R.	B	June 1948—June 1951
106. John Brandeberry	Middlebury, Indiana	OM	July 1948—
107. Mrs. John Brandeberry	Middlebury, Indiana	OM	July 1948—
108. Orvin Kaufman	Middlebury, Indiana	OM	Aug. 1948—Dec. 1950
109. Arlene Shoup	Orrville, Ohio	OM	Aug. 1948—
110. Elta Yoder (Ehret)	Goshen, Indiana	OM	Sept. 1948—Mar. 1949
111. Oliver Stucky	Manitou Springs, Colorado	OM	Oct. 1948—July 1949
112. Mrs. Oliver Stucky	Manitou Springs, Colorado	OM	Oct. 1948—July 1949
113. Vesta Yoder	McPherson, Kansas	OM	Oct. 1948—Apr. 1950
114. Ezra Peachey	Belleville, Pennsylvania	OOA	Oct. 1948—May 1950
115. Addona Nissley	Etna Green, Indiana	OOA	Dec. 1948—Aug. 1950
116. Fred Swartzendruber	Delavan, Illinois	OM	Feb. 1949—May 1951
117. Mrs. Fred Swartzendruber	Toronto, Ontario	OM	Feb. 1949—May 1951
118. Gerald Miller	West Liberty, Ohio	OM	Feb. 1949—Aug. 1950
119. Mrs. Gerald Miller	West Liberty, Ohio	OM	Feb. 1949—Aug. 1950
120. Ruth Nussbaum	Twin Falls, Idaho	OM	Feb. 1949—Oct. 1950
121. Jeannette Lewis	Pekasie, Pennsylvania	OM	May 1949—Dec. 1950
122. Maynard Good	Elkhart, Indiana	OM	June 1949—Jan. 1951
123. Mabel Miller	Wilmot, Ohio	OOA	Sept. 1949—Apr. 1951
124. Henry Zehr	Grabill, Indiana	OM	Apr. 1950—
125. Mrs. Henry Zehr	Grabill, Indiana	OM	Apr. 1950—
126. Esther Unzicker	Fisher, Illinois	OM	May 1950—
127. Wayne Swartzendruber	St. Johns, Michigan	OM	June 1950—
128. Mrs. Wayne Swartzendruber	Beaver Crossing, Nebraska	OM	June 1950—



129. Walter Massanari	Fisher, Illinois	OM	Aug. 1950—
130. Mrs. Walter Massanari	Fisher, Illinois	OM	Aug. 1950—
131. Ethel Zook	New Wilmington, Pennsylvania	OM	Aug. 1950—
132. Orris Yoder	Shipshewana, Indiana	OM	Aug. 1950—
133. Ruth Byler	West Liberty, Ohio	OM	Sept. 1950—
134. Clair Hoover	Goshen, Indiana	OM	Oct. 1950—
135. Mrs. Clair Hoover	Goshen, Indiana	OM	Oct. 1950—
136. Dorothy Lehman	Harrisonburg, Virginia	OM	Nov. 1950—
137. Doris Lehman	Harrisonburg, Virginia	OM	Nov. 1950—
138. Robert Yoder	Milford, Indiana	OM	Nov. 1950—
139. Dean Hochstetler	Nappanee, Indiana	OM	Nov. 1950—
140. Maurice Hooley	La Grange, Indiana	OM	Apr. 1951—
141. Mrs. Maurice Hooley	La Grange, Indiana	OM	Apr. 1951—
142. John Miller	Canby, Oregon	OM	May 1951—
143. Alvin Kaufman	Plain City, Ohio	OM	May 1951—
144. Delmar Byler	Hesston, Kansas	OM	June 1951—
145. Mrs. Delmar Byler	Hesston, Kansas	OM	June 1951—
146. Tillman Hershberger	Hesston, Kansas	OM	June 1951—

*Denomination Abbreviations:* MB, Mennonite Brethren; OM, (old) Mennonite; GC, General Conference Mennonite; OOA, Old Order Amish; CAM, Conservative Amish Mennonite; CGCM, Church of God in Christ Mennonite; MBC, Mennonite Brethren in Christ; B, Baptist; M, Methodist; BC, Brethren in Christ; EMB, Evangelical Mennonite Brethren.

### *Continental Mission Personnel in Puerto Rico*

George and Kathryn Troyer	Linda Reimer	B. Nortell and Edna Troyer
Paul and Lois Lauver	Marjorie Shantz	T. K. and Mae Hershey
Elmer and Clara Springer	Beulah Litwiller	Wilbur and Grace Nachtigall
Lester and Alta Hershey	Marie Yoder	Anna K. Massanari

### *Children of Service and Mission Personnel*

Barbara Amstutz	Willard Hertzler	William W. Preheim
Carolyn Amstutz	David Holsinger	Victor Snyder
John Amstutz	Donald Holsinger	Fred Springer
Vivian Amstutz	John William Lauver	Teddy Springer
Anne Birky	Paul Richard Lauver	Frederick Stover
Karl Birky	Duane Lee Martens	Ruth Elaine Stover
John Robert Brandeberry	Patty Massanari	Anita Arlene Swartzendruber
Julia Brandeberry	Steven Massanari	Frederick Swartzendruber
Janice Jo Hershey	Barbara Helen Nachtigall	Karen Ann Troyer
Lester Eugene Hershey	Rose Mary Nachtigall	Weldon Troyer
Sherilyn May Hershey	Delbert J. Preheim	Gerald Elwood Weaver
Lowell Hertzler		

## APPENDIX B. YEARLY MEDICAL REPORT

I HOSPITAL & CLINIC	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950
Hospital beds	20	36	36	35	35	35	35
Patients hospitalized	165	1134	927	908	990	906	791
Hospital patient days	973	6687	7516	7196	9300	7120	7251
Average patient stay	6.6	5.7	8.2	7.9	9.4	7.8	9.1
Average % of occupancy	34.8	50.9	57.2	56.3	72.8	55.7	55.8
Average hospital census	7.0	18.3	20.6	19.7	25.5	19.5	19.9
Total operations	83	834	933*	602	561	436	380
Major	21	240	171	185	138	91	88
Minor	62	594	762*	417	423	345	292
Deliveries	18	41	34	37	55	62	83
Total outpatient visits	3481	9335	7321	10006	8273	9250	9540
New cases	1623	4164	2973	3085	2475	2869	2522
Return visits	1805	5261	4341	6921	5798	6381	6993
Rabanal clinic visits						672	1934
II HEALTH DEPT. DISPENSARIES							
Total patient visits	**	15586	6401	8957	5292	2775	2855
General clinics		**	2882	3498	1523	†	†
Pediatric clinics		**	1477	2617	1486	202	211
Venereal disease		**	546	841	249		
Tuberculosis		**	834	430	1501	2380	2397
Prenatal		**	374	1571	322	129	197
School hygiene		**			211	64	317
III LABORATORY WORK							
X rays	**	1002	840	970	891	1254	1148
Stool exams	1911	2576	2075	2891	2235	2843	1505
Urinalyses	1815	1258	1135	1445	1975	1940	1715
Hemoglobins	1610	387	733	501	415	473	474
Bl. & cl. time	**	322	360	423	417	211	189
Groupings	**	**	188	229	340	138	283
Differential ct.		**	88	114	320	**	257
Serology	613	**	140	95	89	38	114
Bact. cult	15	**	71	14	17	11	3
Blood chemistry	3	**	30	90	146	113	54
Blood count	288	**	245	344	621	**	516
Misc. smears	341		289	494	438	284	133
Transfusions		**			29	29	53
IV DENTAL WORK							
Patients seen		5701	2185	1645	857		
New patients		2523	771	570	266		
Adult patients			1819	1510	619		
Restorations			597	469	318		
X rays			578	589	478		
Child patients			366	135	238		
Extractions		5268	1689	1150	553		
Special Examinations		2086	824	537	330		
Prophylaxis		582	95	51	44		
Impressions		241	192	71	14		
Dentures		71	55	21	6		

\*\* No official report

\* Includes blood transfusions and pneumothoraxes

† Included in Outpatient Dept.

## APPENDIX C. FINANCIAL STATEMENT

INCOME		June 1943- Nov. 1943	Dec. 1943- Nov. 1944	Dec. 1944- Nov. 1945	Dec. 1945- Nov. 1946	Dec. 1946- Nov. 1947	Dec. 1947- Nov. 1948	Dec. 1948- Dec. 1949	Jan. 1950- Dec. 1950
MCC remittance (MRC 1950)		5,094.28	22,855.07	34,397.13	32,164.80	33,234.76	25,778.12	17,506.63	26,861.34
Receipts from hospital and clinic patients			1,185.01	21,938.62	14,945.78	19,128.35	24,897.93	27,629.25	21,625.39
Receipts from Department of Health clinics				1,804.00	1,933.50	870.00	788.00	1,164.00	1,504.00
Receipts from Insular Government hospital subsidy					19,996.88	19,999.77	20,000.00	21,868.00 <sup>†</sup>	16,696.00 <sup>‡</sup>
Miscellaneous income*			1,760.11	4,081.84	5,532.44	9,142.17	11,808.01	18,181.65	17,239.48
Total Income		5,094.28	25,800.19	62,321.59	74,573.40	82,375.05	83,272.06	86,349.53	83,926.21
EXPENSES									
Medicines, supplies, and hospital wages		313.77	4,416.83	16,530.31	16,437.63	20,209.77	25,823.11	24,751.52	19,864.67
Personnel maintenance and general operating costs		1,614.72	12,673.26	34,176.17	42,552.09	39,813.39	37,825.41	38,375.99	34,213.23
Community service		60.61	1,319.58	1,742.93	3,481.48	1,489.87	548.57	455.35	408.55
Equipment		2,801.02	8,016.97	4,100.23	2,418.76	666.09	2,567.59	3,135.04	648.44
Miscellaneous expenses**				2,763.67	9,975.39	18,837.99	16,507.38	20,091.01	23,791.32
Total Expense		4,790.12	26,426.64	59,313.31	74,865.35	81,017.11	83,272.06	86,808.91	78,926.21
							(Plus cash operating advance)		5,000.00
							Total		83,926.21

\* Fiscal year changed with program transfer to MRC, making a 13-month period.

\*\* Miscellaneous income and expenses included the farm, sewing projects, craft projects and non-budget items.

† Although the project received the full \$20,000 from the Insular Government in 1950 the report shows \$16,696.00 for this 12 month period due to MCC-MRC transfer agreement.

‡ Although the project never received more than \$20,000 from the Insular Government in any government fiscal year it did receive \$21,868 in this 13 month period.















## Date Due

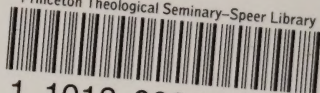
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